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**The integration of terrorist organisations into political systems
Factors, dynamics and circumstances that lead to a successful transformation**

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THE INTEGRATION OF TERRORIST ORGANISATIONS INTO POLITICAL SYSTEMS

***FACTORS, DYNAMICS AND CIRCUMSTANCES
THAT LEAD TO A SUCCESSFUL
TRANSFORMATION***

A dissertation presented by

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ABTSRACT

This research explores the factors, dynamics and circumstances that explain *how* and *why* terrorist organisations decide to integrate into political systems. The research proposes that such integration is a result of decisions and actions taken by a terrorist organisation, the state that deals with it and the surrounding international system.

The research propositions are tested against three cases of terrorist organisations that successfully integrated into political systems: the Irgun, the Ulster Volunteer Force and Hizballah. The findings determine that the presence of certain factors, whether on the organisational, domestic or international levels – and preferably all at the same time – provide the necessary conditions for a successful integration to occur.

The research concludes that the most dominant parameters that create the necessary conditions for terrorists' political integration are: (a) fluctuation in the level of public support for the terrorist organisation's strategy and tactics, (b) internal split in the ranks of a terrorist organisation if one faction becomes more moderate than the other, (c) the mix of aggressive and accommodating counter-terrorism policies employed by the state, and (d) the level and impact of international involvement in the conflict. In situations where these parameters are present and have a tangible influence on a terrorist organisation's decisions, behaviour and actions, the process of integration into a political system by the terrorist organisation is not only more likely, but also faster and more efficient.

Ultimately, the research offers a theoretical model that could potentially provide a set of guidelines for decision-makers on how to instigate, encourage or enhance a transformation process within terrorist organisations, from militant strategy and extremist doctrine toward acceptance of political strategy and democratic principle-based ideology as the sole means to achieve their objectives.

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PREFACE

On January 25th 2006, Hamas – a proscribed terrorist organisation¹ – defied international expectation and won a resounding Palestinian parliamentary election victory. Three months later, a Hamas-led government was sworn in by the President of the Palestinian Authority. Although there are previous cases in which an armed group became involved in politics, Hamas's overwhelming triumph is unique – for the first time an active terrorist group was democratically elected and gained formal control over a recognised political entity.

The new political environment in the Palestinian Authority sparked an extensive debate as to what direction Hamas would take; whether it would continue to adhere to its declared strategy aimed at destroying the state of Israel and establishing an Islamic Palestinian state in its place, or once in control of executive powers and responsible for the people's daily life, Hamas's extremist Islamist ideology would be tempered, and it would abandon terrorism as a tactic in favour of political accommodation. An unequivocal answer to this debate was given by the prime minister of the Hamas-led government, Ismail Haniyeh, who stated that: 'We [Hamas] will go for arms and a parliament, for there's no contradiction between the two.'²

Indeed, Hamas has become a paradigm for a recent phenomenon – the turn by terrorist organisations to legitimate political process as a parallel sphere in which to promote their objectives. Yet, while organisations like Hamas and Hizballah maintain a dual-strategy, namely using terrorism whilst represented in government and pursuing their interests through political institutions, some have not done so. Organisations, such as the Irish Republican Army (IRA), the African National Congress (ANC) and the Basque Euskadi Ta

¹ Hamas is proscribed as a terrorist organisation by the USA, EU, Israel, and Canada. Its military wing, Izz a-din al-Qassam is designated by the UK and Australia.

² Hirst, David. "Arab democracy is exposing the blind spot of US policy", *The Guardian* (23/2/2006); <http://www.guardian.co.uk/print/0,,329419057-103677,00.html> (accessed 22/8/07)

Askatasuna (ETA), abandoned terrorism as their modus operandi, declared a ceasefire and decided to pursue their goals solely through non-violent political channels.

Although every terrorist organisation has distinct ideology and strategy and operates within a specific context, the main challenge is to find common factors and patterns that could lead its political integration. Therefore, the central and hitherto elusive research questions are what factors, dynamics and circumstances explain the integration of terrorist organisations into politics and why the outcomes are intrinsically different from one another. Providing compelling and substantiated answers to these questions may indicate a more effective and targeted policy that would support, and perhaps even accelerate, terrorist integration into political systems.

Ultimately, this study aims to provide a detailed analysis of the integration process in its entirety and allow the reader to better understand the comprehensive set of calculations that lead terrorist organisations to decide to take part in a constitutional arena and to integrate into legitimate political systems. To achieve this objective, the research will offer an original in-depth look into this phenomenon by addressing it through a multilevel analysis and testing case studies, in a way that has not been done before.³ Although much has been written on specific terrorist organisations and their political wings, mainly in the context of local and regional conflicts, it has only touched the periphery of the topic which will be discussed comprehensively throughout this research.

³ Cynthia Irvin notes that the existing research on the shift in military strategies of revolutionary movements and the tendency to add political wings, has been limited, and specifically there have been very few studies that reviewed this from a comparative perspective. See: Irvin, Cynthia. *Militant Nationalism: Between Movement and Party in Ireland and the Basque Country* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

CHAPTER 1: CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Before describing this research, it is important to propose a clear conceptual framework that sets the research boundaries and outlines the main definitions and terms of reference that will be used throughout this study. This is not only a theoretical requirement or an academic imperative, but also has practical implications for this study. Therefore, the following section is designed to clarify the key concepts: terrorism, terrorist organisation, integration and political systems.

TERRORISM

*'Terrorism, one of the most widely discussed issues of our time, is also of the least understood.'*⁴

"Terrorism" is the underlying concept to be discussed in this research and, undoubtedly, the most difficult to define. Adrian Guelke noted that 'by the 1990s, the concept of terrorism had become so elastic that there seemed to be virtually no limit to what could be described as terrorism.'⁵ It is often argued that despite the abundance of written literature and professional work, the study of terrorism 'has unfortunately not been accompanied by a commensurate increase in the understanding of the phenomenon.'⁶ This obscurity stems from the general misunderstanding of what constitutes terrorism and how it can be distinguished from other forms of political violence.

In its original context, the term "terrorism" was linked with the ideals of virtue and democracy (at the time of the French Revolution), and later in history some organisations proudly described their operations as terrorism

⁴ Laqueur, Walter. *Terrorism* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1977), Introductory Note

⁵ Guelke, Adrian. *The Age of Terrorism and the International Political System* (London: Tauris Academic Publishers, 1995), p. 1

⁶ Stohl, Michael (ed.) *The Politics of Terrorism* (New York: Marcel Dekker Inc., 1979), p. 1

(for instance, the Russian Narodnaya Volya and the Jewish Stern Gang). However, nowadays "terrorism" mainly carries negative connotations and terrorist organisations 'regularly select names for themselves that consciously eschew the word "terrorism" in any of its forms.'⁷ Due to the complexity of "terrorism" and its different variations, discourses and subjective nature, as well as the descriptive, normative or polemical contexts in which it is often used, there is no comprehensive, objective and internationally-recognised definition of terrorism.

The definitional controversy is further exacerbated, since the word "terrorism" itself is politically-contested and hardly ever a value-neutral concept.⁸ Indeed, policy makers and modern media have been using the "terrorism" label as a political tool rather than an analytical category to distinguish between different types of violence.⁹ Therefore, in a political environment that associates the word terrorism to one's opponent, very few individuals, organisations or states 'wish the term applied to their own activities,' and likewise their rivals employ it as 'a device to delegitimize the group or state with which they are in conflict.'¹⁰ Subsequently, terrorist organisations attempt to link themselves with other forms of political violence that are, generally, perceived as more legitimate, such as guerrilla warfare, revolutionary violence, resistance operations and insurgency.

Scholars and practitioners who deal with terrorism agree that it is a

⁷ Hoffman, Bruce. *Inside Terrorism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), p. 21; for a useful discussion on the definition of terrorism, see pp. 1-41

⁸ For example, the official editorial guidelines of the BBC specifically states that: 'Our credibility is undermined by the careless use of words which carry emotional or value judgments. The word "terrorist" itself can be a barrier rather than an aid to understanding. We should try to avoid the term, without attribution...We should use words which specifically describe the perpetrator such as "bomber", "attacker", "gunman", "kidnapper", "insurgent", and "militant".'
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/guidelines/editorialguidelines/edguide/war/mandatoryreferr.shtml> (accessed 23/3/07)

⁹ Blakeley, Ruth. "Bringing the State Back into Terrorism Studies", *European Political Science* (6:3, 2007), pp. 228-235

¹⁰ Weinberg, Leonard and Pedahzur, Ami. *Political Parties and Terrorist Groups* (Oxon: Routledge, 2009), p. 2

form of political violence and therefore 'explicable in political terms.'¹¹ Indeed, in the spectrum of political agitation, terrorism is an extreme form of political protest that entails the use of violence as a tactic in the pursuit of political objectives.¹² The notion that terrorism is a political concept is emphasised by Bruce Hoffman, who asserts that this is the primary characteristic that distinguishes it from other types of violence. In his view, in the contemporary usage of the term "terrorism", it is 'fundamentally and inherently political,' and necessarily about the pursuit, acquisition and use of power 'to achieve political change.'¹³

Certainly, the politically-charged nature of terrorism gave rise to the common assertion that "one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter". However, this much-used adage is conceptually misleading since it combines a *method* – terrorism, with a *cause* – national liberation, and implies a value-judgment that terrorism may be legitimate if intended to attain a "just cause". However, Boaz Ganor suggests that the difference between a terrorist and a freedom fighter is not subjective but rather substantive, by emphasising the means employed by the perpetrator, rather than the goals he wishes to achieve.¹⁴ Brian Jenkins adds that labeling one as a terrorist should be dependent upon the nature of his act, and not on the identity of the perpetrators or the nature of their cause.¹⁵ This view was supported by the 2004 "UN High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change", which clearly stated in its report 'that terrorism is never an acceptable tactic, even for the most defensible of causes.'¹⁶

¹¹ Sprinzak, Ehud. "The Psychopolitical formation of extreme left terrorism in democracy: The case of the Weatherman", in Reich, Walter (ed.) *Origins of Terrorism: Psychologies, Ideologies, Theologies, States of Mind* (Washington DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1998), p. 78

¹² Thornton, Thomas Perry. "Terror as a Weapon of Political Agitation", in Eckstein, Harry (ed.). *Internal War: Problems and Approaches* (New York: Free Press, 1964), pp. 71-99

¹³ Hoffman, p. 2

¹⁴ Ganor, Boaz. *The Counter-Terrorism Puzzle: A Guide for Decision Makers* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2005), pp. 1-24

¹⁵ Jenkins, Brian. *The Study of Terrorism: Definitional Problems* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, P-6563, December 1980), p. 2-3

¹⁶ "A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility", *Report of the Secretary-General's High-*

Most definitions of terrorism include recurring elements such as "violence", "political goal", "fear", "threat", "psychological effects", and "deliberate".¹⁷ Since these elements also characterise guerrilla warfare and insurgency, they are often equated with terrorism and widely referred to as synonyms. Notwithstanding this definitional uncertainty, there is one fundamental element that is frequently overlooked – the *identity of the victim*, namely civilians or non-combatants. Leonard Weinberg asserts that by adding civilians or non-combatants as the targets of terrorism, 'we then have a helpful definition of the phenomenon, one useful for identifying and analyzing the tactic.'¹⁸

A reductionist approach, which disregards the identity of the victim, is the principal factor that allows terrorism to be confused with other types of "irregular" violence. According to Ganor, while guerrilla warfare and insurgency are tactics that, traditionally, involve the use of violence against military and governmental targets, the underlying element that distinguishes terrorism from other types of political violence is the deliberate targeting of civilians.¹⁹ This notion received a formal recognition in the above-mentioned UN report that recommended defining terrorism as:

An act intended to cause death or serious bodily harm to civilians or non-combatants, when the purpose of such act, by its nature or context, is to intimidate a population, or to compel a Government or an international organization to do or to abstain from doing any act.²⁰

Although the UN's recommendation was never confirmed by the General

level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change (UN Department of Public Information, December 2004), p. 51;

http://www.un.org/en/peacebuilding/pdf/historical/hlp_more_secure_world.pdf (accessed 12/1/06)

¹⁷ In one of the most extensive works in search of a single accepted definition, Albert Jongman and Alex Schmid, identified more than 100 definitional variations of terrorism. See Schmid, Alex and Jongman, Albert. *Political Terrorism: A New Guide to Actors, Authors, Concepts, Data Bases, Theories, and Literature* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1988)

¹⁸ Weinberg, Leonard. *Democracy and Terrorism: Friend of Foe* (Oxon: Routledge, 2013), p. 10

¹⁹ Ganor, pp. 16-24

²⁰ "A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility", p. 52

Assembly, it provides a normative framework that defines terrorism as a premeditated use of violence against civilians or non-combatants to achieve political objectives.²¹ Evidently, the definition of terrorism, as stipulated in the UN report, does not distinguish between states and non-state actors as the perpetrators of violent acts against civilians. Indeed, states and governments also employ the same violent tactic against their own citizens or those of another country, as a 'means of exercising power and indirectly accomplishing policy aims.'²²

However, while non-state actors are not subject to the laws of armed conflict, or to any other legally-binding operational limitations, states that use terrorism essentially violate international humanitarian law. Clearly, the legal and normative framework against states that employ terrorism against civilians 'is far stronger than in the case of non-state actors.'²³ Subsequently, agents of a state that use terrorism against civilians are regarded as war criminals according to international treaties, and could be prosecuted in international criminal courts for war crimes and crimes against humanity. Although the prohibition against the use of terrorism to target civilians and non-combatants should be applied equally to states and non-state actors, in reality members of terrorist organisations operate within the framework of low intensity warfare (as oppose to armed conflict), over which the international treaties have limited reach and effect.²⁴ Cronin concludes that non-state terrorist organisations 'do not abide by international laws or norms,' and their acts of violence are 'intentionally directed against people who are generally considered to be defenseless and illegitimate targets.'²⁵ This study deals strictly with terrorism carried out by non-state actors.

²¹ For more on the identity of the victim see Stern, Jessica. *The Ultimate Terrorists* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999)

²² Cronin, Audrey Kurth. *How Terrorism Ends: Understanding the Decline and Demise of Terrorist Campaigns* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), p. 4

²³ "A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility", p. 51

²⁴ Jodoin, Sebastian. "Terrorism as a War Crime", *International Criminal Law Review* (Vol. 7, 2007), pp. 77-115

²⁵ Cronin, p. 7

In conclusion, it would be audacious to assert that this research will resolve the definitional dispute as to what "terrorism" is. Nonetheless, it is essential to propose an adequate definition of terrorism; one that maintains the focus on the investigated research topic without entering into un-resolvable theoretical debates. Thus, the working definition of terrorism that will be used throughout this research is: *the deliberate use, or threat to use, violence against civilians or non-combatants to create fear and public disorder, in order to achieve a political objective.*

TERRORIST ORGANISATION

There is a wide array of different types of non-state organisations that employ terrorist tactics, ranging from hierarchical to network approaches.²⁶ Yet, a common definition is provided by Richard Shultz, who characterises a terrorist organisation as the 'formalized structure utilised for the planning, coordination, and application of extranormal forms of political violence.'²⁷ John Horgan elaborates that terrorist organisations are 'relatively small, (semi) clandestine collectives built on anti-establishment political or religious ideologies...using violence or the threat thereof to carry influence.'²⁸ Another dimension is addressed by Fred Halliday, who asserts that contrary to other types of organisations, a terrorist organisation challenges the state-centric system and seeks to topple a government or to destabilise the political and social foundations of a state.²⁹

For the purpose of this research, a terrorist organisation will be defined as *a hierarchical and clandestine non-state body that systematically employs*

²⁶ Mishal, Shaul and Rosenthal, Maoz. "Al Qaeda as a Dune Organization: Toward a Typology of Islamic Terrorist organizations", *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* (28:4, July/August 2005), pp. 275-293

²⁷ Shultz, Richard. "Conceptualizing Political Terrorism: A Typology", *Journal of International Affairs* (32:1, 1978), p. 12

²⁸ Horgan, John. *The Psychology of Terrorism* (Oxford: Routledge, 2005), p. 1

²⁹ Halliday, Fred. "The Romance of Non-State Actors", in Josselin, Daphne and Wallace, William (eds.) *Non-State Actors in World Politics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), p. 22

*terrorism in order to influence a political process.*³⁰ This study adopts a *qualitative* perspective over a *quantitative* one, in order to avoid subjective or politically-loaded assertions that determine the type of organisation according to the number of violent attacks.³¹ Hence, once an organisation has employed terrorism, 'it has broken a normative rule and regardless of the type of goals it champions and other methods it uses to realise those goals, it should be defined as a terrorist organisation.'³²

In principle, this research deals exclusively with terrorist organisations that had an active political wing whilst using violence, or formed one before deciding to take part in legitimate political process. Although, political and military wings of a terrorist organisation can be officially separate entities, in most cases the former is subordinate to the latter or emerges from it, as suggested by Anthony Richards.³³

INTEGRATION INTO POLITICAL SYSTEMS

This thesis focuses entirely on integration in the context of *participation in conventional party politics activity on a national level*.³⁴ Since terrorist organisations are rarely allowed to participate directly in institutionalised politics, they seek to expand and acquire power through the establishment of a political party. Its aim is to rally broad support for the terrorist organisation's objectives by 'building a network of members and activists and working toward

³⁰ It is known that international terrorist networks, such as Al-Qaida, are largely decentralised and non-hierarchical, and are comprised of covert cells spread around the globe.

³¹ An example for using the quantitative index is of Dr. Rola El-Husseini of Yale University, who refers to Hizballah as a resistance group rather than a terrorist organisation. She relies on the fact that 'in recent times the group has only conducted attacks on Israeli Defence Forces in the Shebba Farms area, a disputed strip on the border between Lebanon...[and] has not participated in any suicide bombings or other attacks aimed at Israeli civilians since the 1980s,' and therefore it cannot be designated as a terrorist organisation. Joudi, Steve. "Hizballah: Political Party or Terrorist Organization", Center for Near Eastern Studies (UCLA, 27/4/2005); <http://www.international.ucla.edu/article.asp?parentid=23750> (accessed 24/3/07)

³² Ganor, p. 23

³³ Richards, Anthony. "Terrorist Groups and Political Fronts: The IRA, Sinn Fein, the Peace Process and Democracy", *Terrorism and Political Violence* (13:4, Winter 2001), pp. 72-89

³⁴ Weinberg, Leonard. *The End of Terrorism?* (Oxon: Routledge, 2012), pp. 116-117

mobilizing the target community for eventual political action.'³⁵ As such, the party becomes the terrorist's central platform for political integration.

In effect, according to Peter Neumann, by forming a political party and integrating into a political system the 'terrorists acknowledge the authority of the existing institutional framework,' even though ideologically they negate the regime or its policies.³⁶ Normally, integration itself grants a degree of legitimacy to the organisation's activity and allows it to become a lawful political actor, even if it does not fully adhere to the common rules of the "political game". However, the mere participation in politics does not constitute an integration, unless it is accompanied by an active involvement 'that goes above and beyond simply casting a ballot.'³⁷

Yet, it is important to note that there is a notional spectrum of terrorist's political integration (see figure 1); the higher the level of integration the more a terrorist organisation is embedded in the state's political system and required to adhere to its laws and procedures. Moreover, moving upward through the different forms of integration necessarily indicates deeper involvement in the political system.

³⁵ Siqueira, Kevin. "Political and Militant Wings within Dissident Movements and Organizations", *Journal of Conflict Resolution* (49:2, April 2005), p. 219

³⁶ Neumann, Peter. "The Bullet and the Ballot Box: The Case of the IRA", *Journal of Strategic Studies* (28:6, December 2005), p. 945

³⁷ McVeigh, Rory and Smith, Christian. "Who Protests in America: An Analysis of Three Political Alternatives - Inaction, Institutionalized Politics, or Protest", *Sociological Forum* (14:4, December 1999), p. 687

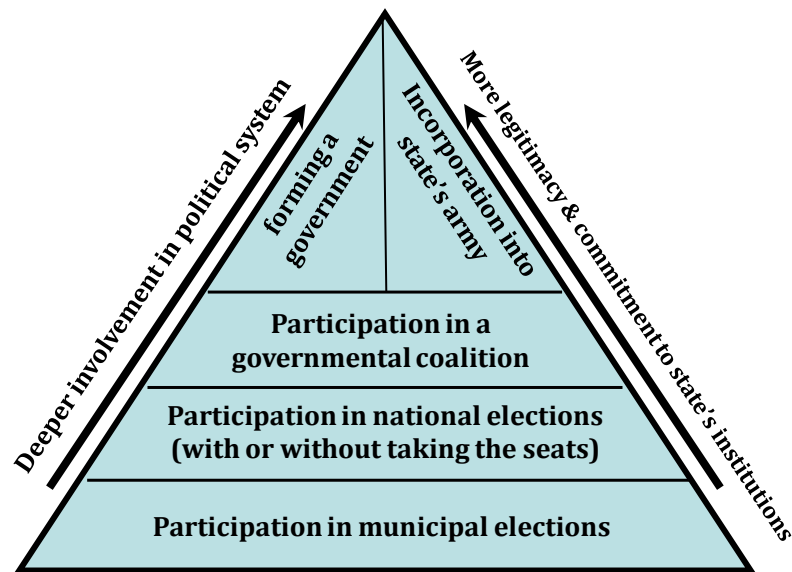


Figure 1: Levels of terrorist integration into political systems

The most basic form of terrorist integration is participation in municipal politics, which often provides an ideal stepping stone in moving forward to state-level politics (such as Fatah's and Hamas's control over local councils in the Palestinian Authority). A higher degree of integration is taking part in parliamentary elections, either by accepting or refusing to take the seats in case of a successful campaign (as with Sinn Fein's policy of abstentionism). Terrorist representation in a governmental coalition is usually the next level (for example, Hizballah's participation in Lebanon's governmental coalition). Ultimately, the two highest levels of integration, which equally indicate the organisation's willingness and readiness to become an integral part of the state's political system, are forming a government after winning elections (as in the case of Hamas's triumph in the Palestinian legislative elections) and members' incorporation into institutionalised armed forces (for instance, the absorption of Irgun members into the Israel Defence Forces in the late 1940s). Once a terrorist organisation has reached the peak of political integration, it may decommission its arms and surrender them to the state.

By political systems, this study is concerned with the organised structures of power and authority within a state and their interaction with civil society. The focus of this study would be on the mediating institutions which

link civil society to government, notably political parties. More specifically, a political system could be regarded as a pluralist one, yet not necessarily democratic in the common Western sense, which manifests sovereignty over a territory and people, when it exhibits fragmentation and dispersion of political power and so enables organised groups to raise their demands and take part in public debate.³⁸ Such a political system provides legitimacy and stable procedures, norms, and processes for the achievement of one's objectives. Roland Pennock notes that it has the capacity to 'convert power into authority, to secure the popular acceptance of its acts as legitimate and to channel order-threatening struggles for power through the political machine.'³⁹ Therefore, this study deals with the integration of terrorist organisations into the representative elected bodies that operate within a pluralist political system, in order to obtain the ability to 'influence the way in which authoritative decisions are formulated and executed for a society.'⁴⁰

Political systems that in their nature may be classified as authoritarian or totalitarian will not be examined in this study, as they are not 'constrained in their ability to deploy military force domestically,' and often they are more inclined to 'eradicate insurgent terrorism from below by employing state terrorism,' instead of reaching an understanding or a compromise.⁴¹ These practices characterise regimes that often prohibit the formation of political parties, prevent a genuine opportunity for organised groups to voice their ideology and use ruthless methods to tackle any form of opposition. This is particularly important since generally the common instrument for terrorist

³⁸ Miller, Nicholas. "Pluralism and Social Choice", *The American Political Science Review* (77:3, September 1983), pp. 734-747

³⁹ Pennock, Roland. "Political Development, Political systems, and Political Goods", in Kabashima, Ikuo and White, Lynn T (eds.) *Political System and Change* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), p. 77

⁴⁰ Easton, David. "An Approach to the Analysis of Political Systems", in Kabashima and White (eds.), p. 24

⁴¹ Art, Robert and Richardson, Louise (eds.) *Democracy and Counterterrorism: Lessons from the Past* (Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2007), pp. 3-4

integration into politics is the establishment of a political party.⁴²

In contrast to the inherently violent and revolutionary nature of a terrorist organisation, a political party has traditionally been the platform that provides the legal means to participate in and to influence the political system, win public office, gain control over a government, serve the interests of the state and address the needs of the people.⁴³ Indeed, many of the terrorist organisations that had some degree of political integration have done so by forming political parties to focus their efforts on engaging in a legitimate political process to accomplish their long-term objectives.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The electoral victory of Hamas in 2006 is probably one of the most recognised examples of terrorist integration into a political system, but it is certainly not the only one. Since the 1960s, there have been approximately 40 cases of terrorist organisations that joined political systems and became legitimate actors in their respective political entities (albeit not all of them abandoned violence whilst engaged in politics).⁴⁴ The majority of terrorist organisations that integrated into political systems are located in South America (the most notable examples are Uruguay's Tupamaros and Colombia's M-19). However, some of the other prominent cases are located in the Middle-East (the Irgun, the Palestine Liberation Organisation, Hamas and Hizabllah), Europe (various organisations in Northern Ireland and ETA) and the African continent (the ANC).⁴⁵

Certainly, the *raison d'être* of terrorist organisations and political parties is fundamentally different; while 'parties provide a peaceful way to resolve

⁴² O'Leary, Brendan and Tirman, John. "Thinking About Durable Political Violence", in Heiberg, Marianne, et.al. (eds.) *Terror, Insurgency, and the State: Ending Protracted Conflicts* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2007), pp. 1-17

⁴³ This is true in pluralistic states in which governments are held accountable by the public for the way they perform their task, and the public is the sovereign that holds the power to replace a government in free elections.

⁴⁴ Weinberg and Pedahzur, pp. 17-39

⁴⁵ Ibid, pp. 75-104

conflict, terrorist groups represent the opposite, a way of getting what they want through the bomb and the gun.'⁴⁶ Nonetheless, the limited number of terrorist organisations turning to politics (as oppose to 154 instances in which political parties created, promoted or supported terrorist groups), suggests that choosing to participate in institutionalised politics is by no means a natural decision, since it challenges the terrorists' revolutionary nature.⁴⁷ Typically, from the perspective of a terrorist organisation, a political system is perceived as part of an illegal order and a representative of a hostile regime, which they are fighting to replace by undermining its legitimacy. Cynthia Irvin notes that members of terrorist organisations who reject political integration often argue that involvement in political activity 'only legitimates the institutions of the incumbent regime and leads not to victory but to mere reformism.'⁴⁸

Despite the existence of various terrorist organisations that had some level of integration into political systems, the body of literature dealing with this phenomenon has not attracted as much scholarly attention as other disciplinary developments (such as the causes of terrorism, the profile of terrorists, the effectiveness of counter-terrorism strategies, etc.). Therefore, to provide a satisfactory explanatory framework there is a need to examine related factors and processes, through which one can derive relevant insights for this study on the reasons for political integration. One process that is often linked and can shed light on terrorist integration into political systems is the study of how and why terrorism declines and the available alternative paths. What follows will examine the converging internal and external processes that eventually induce terrorist organisations to consider politics as a substitute or a complementary tactic to violence. This proposition is supported by the work of Audrey Cronin, who argues that a change in the application of terrorism is 'as

⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 15

⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 29

⁴⁸ Irvin, p. 6

much determined by innate factors as by external policies or actors.'⁴⁹

The principal rationale for abandoning terrorism is that it has failed as a strategy for achieving a particular organisation's objectives. Paul Wilkinson notes that 'terrorism is a faulty weapon that often misfires,' and only rarely successful in achieving the organisations' strategic goals.⁵⁰ Martha Crenshaw elaborates that 'few organisations actually attain the long-term ideological objectives they claim to seek, and therefore one must conclude that terrorism is objectively a failure.'⁵¹ Consequently, when a terrorist organisation faces a strategic junction in which it acknowledges that the use of violence is no longer effectively promoting its objectives, other alternatives may come to the fore, ranging from abandoning terrorism, disbandment and political accommodation. Kevin Siqueira best describes this strategic junction that is often followed by a decline in terrorism and preference for a political course:

At certain times, political movements and organisations must feel like they are being confronted with the hard choice of determining which type of activities they should stress and emphasise the most, the political or the militant.⁵²

It seems that in the last thirty years, transition to legitimate political engagement is more common than disbandment, as it is perceived as a substitute strategy to promote the terrorist organisations' ideological and political goals. This assertion is supported by a comprehensive research, conducted by the RAND Corporation in 2008, which examined how terrorism ends and showed that one of the two major reasons why terrorist organisations abandon violence is that they view politics as a more effective strategy to achieve their objectives. (The second major reason is the use of police and

⁴⁹ Cronin, Audrey Kurth. "How al-Qaida Ends: The Decline and Demise of Terrorist Groups", *International Security* (31:1, Summer 2006), p. 11

⁵⁰ Wilkinson, Paul (2nd ed.) *Terrorism Versus Democracy: The Liberal State Response* (Oxon: Routledge, 2006), p. 49

⁵¹ Crenshaw, Martha. "Theories of Terrorism: Instrumental and Organizational Approaches," in Rapoport, David (ed.) *Inside Terrorist Organizations* (London: Frank Cass, 1988), p. 15

⁵² Siqueira, p. 218

intelligence to destroy terrorist organisations).⁵³

Robert Ross and Ted Gurr examined internal dynamics that led to a decline in the level of political terrorism in the US and Canada. They claim that whether an organisation embraces a strategy of terrorism or the alternative of peaceful means is largely determined by its *success* or *failure* in achieving its core objectives. In times when a terrorist organisation fails to advance its objectives by using violence, it will be more inclined to resort to other means that might assist in accomplishing its goals, including political participation. They also suggest that the strength of the organisation's *military* and *political* capabilities – ability to use force and the credibility of their threats, as well as the commitment to the cause and the degree of public and political support – affect the likelihood of using violence. Finally they offer two organisational processes, which they coined as *burnout* – a decline in members' commitment to the organisation and its objectives, resulting in defections, factionalism and resistance to the existing leadership, and *backlash* – loss of public support for the terrorist organisation's activity and objectives. These two internal dynamics may reduce the operational capability of a terrorist organisation, thus damaging its military strength whilst contributing to the possibility of adopting alternative means, other than terrorism.⁵⁴

Other intrinsic processes that contribute to the decision to participate in political systems were offered by Weinberg and Pedahzur. They noted that constant need for terrorist organisations to operate in extreme secrecy could lead to isolation from the outside world.⁵⁵ The clandestine nature of terrorist activity has negative effects, which essentially prevents the organisation from conveying its messages and cuts off its links to the public and access to the mass media. Therefore, restoring the terrorists' link to their targeted constituencies can be achieved through operating in the political domain that

⁵³ Jones, Seth and Libicki, Martin. *How Terrorist Groups End: Lessons for Countering al-Qa'ida* (The RAND Corporation, 2008), pp. 18-26

⁵⁴ Ross, Jeffrey and Gurr, Ted. "Why Terrorism Subsides: A Comparative Study of Canada and the United States", *Comparative Politics* (21:4, July 1989), pp. 405-426

⁵⁵ Weinberg and Pedahzur, pp. 61-85

provides legitimacy and strengthens public support.

Alex Schmid and Jenny de Graaf offer a different approach by emphasising that the lack of access to media can in itself lead to increased terrorism. They claim that by granting terrorists a legitimate channel of communication to publicise their grievances, a state could assist in reducing the level of violence and promoting political engagement.⁵⁶ Political expression is, undoubtedly, a vital factor in a terrorist organisation's realisation that its long-term objectives are better accomplished by forming an overt political wing. In doing so, a terrorist organisation can develop a sense of its public standing within particular constituency, and to legally raise further funds and recruit members.⁵⁷ Indeed, the ability to take part in elections and opinion polls is essential to any organisation, including the political wings of terrorist organisations that wish to assess their political power and find new ways of gaining more popular support.

Another process, which is not necessarily internal but rather cross-organisational, that has an impact on the transition from terrorism into politics, is referred to as the "competitive environment" in which terrorist organisations operate. According to Seth Jones and Martin Libicki, splintering is a common phenomenon among terrorist organisations, and it often occurs when terrorists 'calculate that they have a better chance of reaching their objectives if they join a stronger group or start a new one.'⁵⁸ In such cases, the new faction could opt to use political means to accomplish its ideological objectives, while the older may choose to maintain violence as the preferred method. Crenshaw suggests that when there is a rivalry between terrorist organisations with similar strategies and objectives that compete over resources and the support of the same public, a decision to participate in the political arena is more likely.⁵⁹ Siqueira describes another type of internal divide in which dissident factions

⁵⁶ Schmid, Alex and de Graaf, Jenny. *Violence and Communication: Insurgent Terrorism and the Western News Media* (Beverly Hills: Sage, 1982), pp. 9-56

⁵⁷ Weinberg and Pedahzur, p. 64

⁵⁸ Jones and Libicki, p. 13

⁵⁹ Crenshaw, pp. 22-23

advocate contradictory interests and methods, while still claiming to support the organisation's common ideological and strategic objectives. Consequently, a political wing is formed to engage in overt activities aimed at mobilising public support and enhancing the level of commitment among members and sympathisers. The terrorist wing, however, continues to operate clandestinely and carry out violent attacks aimed at achieving the organisation's political or ideological goals.⁶⁰

To complete the various dynamics and processes that contribute to terrorist integration into political systems, it is essential to introduce a set of important external factors that may drive terrorist organisations to integrate into political systems. References to external factors are primarily applied to the behaviour and actions of institutionalised entities that operate outside the organisational realm and deal with terrorist groups (namely states), and the relationship of the international system to the conflict.⁶¹

The supposition that both states and the international system have a significant impact on the level of violence has been gaining ground in the past decades. Crenshaw suggests that policies implemented by external actors may increase the cost or decrease the reward for terrorist organisations, and therefore make the use of violence less likely, and indirectly enhance the probability of integration into political systems.⁶² Ganor argues that the primary objective of any governmental counter-terrorism policy is often to persuade the terrorists to modify their ideology and strategy, thus effectively increasing the likelihood of them choosing politics as a platform to advance their objectives.⁶³ General Sir Charles Guthrie, former commander of the British Army, supports this assertion by stressing that terrorist organisations can be tamed by state's policies 'if the proper mix of carrot and stick is judiciously

⁶⁰ Siqueira, pp. 218-236

⁶¹ Cronin, "How al-Qaida Ends: The Decline and Demise of Terrorist Groups", p. 14

⁶² Crenshaw, "Theories of Terrorism: Instrumental and Organizational Approaches", p.13

⁶³ Ganor, pp. 25-38

administered.'⁶⁴

The assumption of external actors' influence is also endorsed by Ross and Gurr, who argue that the shift from violence to politics is an outcome of terrorists' decisions, which are 'made at least partly in response to changes in the larger social and political environment in which they act.'⁶⁵ More specifically, they describe two counter-terrorism strategies that when undertaken by legitimate authorities can affect the terrorists' decisions to adopt political accommodation. The first is *preemption*, which actively counters terrorists' operational capabilities and denies their possibility to respond (such as targeted killings against potential terrorists aimed at thwarting future attacks). The second is *deterrence*, which increases the costs and reduces the benefits of terrorist action and renders joining or supporting terrorism highly risky (such as tougher anti-terrorism laws which entail more stringent penalties).

Donald Horowitz suggests that in conflict-ridden regions in which societies are divided and are saddled by intense feelings of animosity and hostility, a state can offer political incentives to accommodate differences that go a long way towards reducing the overall level of violence.⁶⁶ He emphasises that the primary aim is not to make people love each other, but to produce 'an electoral system that creates some incentives that reward moderation.'⁶⁷ In other words, a state that confronts a terrorist organisation can establish devices and mechanisms that create incentives and promotes cooperation towards political integration, through which terrorist organisations can redesign their ideology as well as strategy.

The notion that integration into political systems has a moderating effect

⁶⁴ Guthrie, Charles. "Forward", in Reid, Anna (ed.) *Taming Terrorism: It's Been Done Before* (London: Policy Exchange, 2005), p. 7

⁶⁵ Ross and Gurr, p. 407

⁶⁶ Horowitz, Donald. "Conflict and the incentives to political accommodation", in Keogh, Dermot and Haltzel, Michael (eds.) *Northern Ireland and the Politics of Reconciliation* (Washington DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1993), pp. 173-188

⁶⁷ Ibid, p. 188

on terrorist organisations has been gaining ground over the last years. Dipak Gupta asserts that terrorist organisations that decide to join a democratic political process and become mainstream participants may lose their motivation for being a revolutionary force.⁶⁸ Benedetta Berti suggests that once terrorist organisations join political systems they become more interested in their own preservation and survival and pay less attention to promoting their original objectives through violence. As such, participation in a political system through a political party 'serves as an "accommodation-seeking tool".'⁶⁹ Marina Ottaway supports this assumption and argues that 'there is ample evidence that participation in electoral process forces any party, regardless of ideology, to moderate its position if it wants to attract voters in large numbers.'⁷⁰ Moreover, accountability and transparency, not the usual attributes of any terrorist organisation, become instrumental in gaining more political power and public support. Needless to say, an extremist ideology and the use of violence do not go hand-in-hand with such political objectives. Yet, examining examples of terrorist organisations taking the road to politics did not provide empirical support for the position that political engagement necessarily entails moderation, as noted by Neumann.⁷¹

Another type of state behaviour discussed in the literature includes presenting amnesty or reduced sentences for repented terrorists, and providing them with 'an opportunity to reconstitute themselves as a peaceful political party.'⁷² Franco Ferracuti writes that 'in order to encourage dissent within the terrorist group and then defection from it, the state must provide a way out,' by offering safe and legitimate place in society 'in exchange for a renunciation of terrorism.'⁷³ In addition, Crenshaw notes that offering clemency

⁶⁸ Gupta, Dipak. *Understanding Terrorism and Political Violence* (Oxon: Routledge, 2008), pp. 161-164

⁶⁹ Berti, Benedetta. "Armed Groups as Political Parties and Their Role in Electoral Politics: The Case of Hizballah", *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* (34:12, 2011), p. 943

⁷⁰ Ottaway in Herzog, Michael, "Can Hamas be Tamed?" *Foreign Affairs* (85:2, March/April 2006), p. 84

⁷¹ Neumann, pp. 941-975

⁷² Weinberg and Pedahzur, p. 62

⁷³ Ferracuti, Franco. "Ideology and repentance: Terrorism in Italy", in Reich, Walter (ed.)

not only encourages a shift towards legitimate political action, but can also create internal discontent and suspicion that may lead to organisational disintegration and to contemplating political integration as an option.⁷⁴ She writes that 'the task of the government is to encourage disintegration without provoking the escalation of violence,' through a consistently repressive hard-line policy aimed at damaging the organisation's operational capability and undermining its legitimacy in the eyes of its supporters.⁷⁵ Incidentally, whether the government policy is repressive, coercive or lenient, it should be 'offering new, non-violent incentives, and increasing opportunities for exit to non-political methods.'⁷⁶

Similarly, in the past decade several states broadened their counter-terrorism policies to include discussion and dialogue as means to convince terrorists, mainly driven by Islamist ideology, to abandon violence. This relatively new approach, which often involves rehabilitation or de-radicalisation initiatives, is aimed at facilitating an exit from terrorist activity based either on social and economic assistance or ideological and theological re-education.⁷⁷ According to Rohan Gunaratna, states that adopted these measures, primarily in Western Europe, the Middle-East and Asia, invest substantial resources in 'building community-based programmes that aim to engage indoctrinated extremists and rehabilitate operational terrorists,' hoping that they would lead to disengagement from violence.⁷⁸ Despite the potential benefits, ranging from full amnesty, job training and economic subsidies, John Horgan and Kurt Braddock emphasise the difficulty of evaluating the success in

Origins of Terrorism: Psychologies, Ideologies, Theologies, States of Mind (Washington DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 1998), p. 62

⁷⁴ Crenshaw, Martha. "How Terrorism Declines", *Terrorism and Political Violence* (3:1, Spring 1991), pp. 69-87

⁷⁵ Crenshaw, "Theories of Terrorism: Instrumental and Organizational Approaches", p. 24

⁷⁶ *Ibid*, p. 25

⁷⁷ Dalgaard-Nielsen, Anja. "Promoting Exit from Violent Extremism: Themes and Approaches", *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* (36:2, 2013), pp. 99-115

⁷⁸ Gunaratna, Rohan. "Terrorist Rehabilitation: a Global Imperative", *Journal of Policing, Intelligence and Counter Terrorism* (6:1, 2011), p. 66

securing a long-term sustainable disengagement from terrorism.⁷⁹ Nonetheless, community engagement and de-radicalisation measures could, undoubtedly, encourage rehabilitated terrorists to lose faith in their militant ideology and espouse a more peaceful agenda.

The polar opposite state behaviour is an aggressive governmental response to terrorism that may force the organisation into inactivity and to look for a substitute strategy. A suitable alternative that can sustain the organisation's survival is the formation of a political wing to pursue its ideological objectives through peaceful means. According to Crenshaw, there is ample evidence for tough governmental counter-terrorism policy that was instrumental in a terrorist organisation's decision to end terrorism and to resort to substitute channels.⁸⁰ On the other hand, there are cases in which lack of strong governmental response also resulted in a decline in the level of terrorism. For example, preferring lenient and flexible judicial mechanisms that offer reduced sentences and facilitate collaboration with the police, instead of repressive counter-terrorism measures, can also prove profitable in persuading terrorists to adopt peaceful measures.⁸¹ Gupta concludes that a state has significant influence on terrorists' disengagement from violence, whether voluntarily or involuntarily. He emphasises that giving up arms through a negotiated settlement with the target government may result in 'some sort of a direct power-sharing arrangement,' or even in becoming an integral part of a democratic political process.⁸²

Another motivation for integration into political systems may include the formation of a new political order, which allows terrorist organisations to establish an overt political wing, and to become a certified political actor. A newborn democratic system provides several opportunities for terrorist

⁷⁹ Horgan, John and Braddock, Kurt. "Rehabilitating the Terrorists? Challenges in Assessing the Effectiveness of De-radicalization Programs", *Terrorism and Political Violence* (22:2), pp. 267-291

⁸⁰ Crenshaw, "How Terrorism Declines", pp. 69-87

⁸¹ Ferracuti, pp. 59-64

⁸² Gupta, p. 162

organisations to integrate into the recently consolidated institutions, such as joining of the military cadres into the army ranks, and the establishment of a political party by the organisation's leadership. However, Brendan O'Leary and Andrew Silke argue the opposite, namely that democratic regimes lift some of the pressure on terrorist organisations and allow them more freedom to organise and operate, and conclude that democratisation 'offers no immediate prospects of pacification and may facilitate more evenly matched contests for power.'⁸³

All the above mentioned external processes and dynamics can indirectly influence or promote, but not necessarily force, a terrorist organisation's decision to integrate into a political system. A different and more straightforward alternative is to initiate some level of negotiations with terrorist organisations, which can serve as a catalyst for convincing them that their objectives are better achieved through legitimate political action. Daniel Byman favours this approach by arguing that 'beginning a dialogue with terrorists is often a necessary first step on the road toward a political settlement and an end to violence.'⁸⁴ Although talking with terrorists can persuade their constituencies to renounce violence and to empower the moderates within the organisations, it can also be very risky and is frequently counter-productive. Crenshaw asserts that due to the violent nature of terrorism and its indirect psychological effects on the public, 'governments may thus be more reluctant to enter into negotiated settlements with groups using terrorism.'⁸⁵ Moreover, negotiating with terrorists may grant them legitimacy and reward them for their violence. Byman asserts that the 'price of recognition might be worthwhile if there was a guarantee of success in the end.'⁸⁶ Yet, this

⁸³ O'Leary, Brendan and Silke, Andrew. "Understanding and Ending Persistent Conflicts: Bridging Research and Policy", in Heiberg, Marianne, et.al. (eds.) *Terror, Insurgency, and the State: Ending Protracted Conflicts* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2007), p. 419

⁸⁴ Byman, Daniel. "The Decision to Begin Talks with Terrorists: Lessons for Policymakers", *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* (29:5, 2006), p. 403

⁸⁵ Crenshaw, Martha. "Pathways out of Terrorism: A Conceptual Framework", in Germani, Sergio and Kaarthikeyan, D.R. (eds.) *Pathways out of Terrorism and Insurgency* (Elgin, IL: New Dawn Press Group, 2005), p. 4

⁸⁶ Byman, p. 407

assurance cannot be provided in advance and the negotiations may backfire.

In conclusion, despite the growing academic research dedicated to understanding the relations between terrorist organisations and the factors that influence them in seeking political accommodation, the existing literature is still limited. The work of scholars and practitioners has remained focused on the reasons for ending violence and the factors that shape the behaviour and actions of a terrorist organisation after it joins a political system.⁸⁷ The purpose of this study is to provide insights and contribute to the understanding of the internal and external factors, dynamics and circumstances that lead terrorist organisations to integrate into political systems.

RESEARCH PROPOSITIONS

It has been argued that 'the study of terrorism is often narrowly conceived and full of gaps,' and that existing models for its analysis and conceptualization are largely inadequate.⁸⁸ David Brannan criticises this theoretical deficiency by observing that terrorism has become 'an enemy to be engaged in combat rather than a social phenomenon to be understood.' In his view, 'theorizing about terrorism has always been problematic as a consequence of the diverse nature of the groups and individuals that are categorized as "terrorist."'⁸⁹ Peter Neumann and M.L.R Smith are even more critical when suggesting that 'the gap in the scholarly literature must be addressed urgently because the lack of a theoretical framework in which to understand terrorism leads to questionable assertions about its practice.'⁹⁰

In face of this epistemological predicament, this research explores three specific propositions from the perspectives of terrorist organisations, states

⁸⁷ Berti, p. 943

⁸⁸ Cronin, "How al-Qaida Ends: The Decline and Demise of Terrorist Groups", p. 9

⁸⁹ Brannan, David, W. et. al. "Talking to "Terrorists": Towards an Independent Analytical Framework for the Study of Violent Substate Activism", *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* (24:1, 2001), p. 4-6

⁹⁰ Neumann, Peter and Smith, M.L.R. "Strategic Terrorism: The Framework and its Fallacies", *The Journal of Strategic Studies* (28:4, August 2005), p. 572

that have to deal with them, and the surrounding international system. According to Robert Yin, the purpose of propositions of this sort is, on one hand, to direct the reader's attention 'to something that should be examined within the scope of the study,' and on the other hand to maintain it 'within feasible limits.'⁹¹ Consequently, the propositions are intended to serve as a basis for the development of a theoretical model that would allow scholars and practitioners to test future case studies of terrorists' integration into peaceful politics, as well as to draw broad generalisations about the characteristics of this phenomenon.

The research propositions encompass a range of factors that 'are not arranged in a neat equilateral triangle, but have different effects as circumstances vary,' and thus they play different parts in the integration of terrorist organisations into political systems.⁹² As such, while some factors are more likely to have an impact on a terrorist organisation, others could relate more to states or the international system. The factors employed in this study were derived from the terrorism literature and are considered to be the most significant pillars in the trilateral relationship between terrorist organisations, states and the international system that influence political integration. Consequently, they will be explored and their efficacies tested against specific case studies. The presence of a single factor will not, by itself, necessarily point to an inclination by a group to integrate into a political system, but the presence of a number of them will provide a substantive evidence of a potential political integration.

The first proposition refers to *terrorist organisations* and holds that a set of internal factors (separated from other external influences) impact a terrorist organisation's actions, judgments and decisions and eventually lead to political integration. The factors examined under this perspective are part of any

⁹¹ Yin, Robert. (5th ed.) *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (London: Sage Publications Ltd., 2014), p. 29

⁹² Cronin, *How Terrorism Ends: Understanding the Decline and Demise of Terrorist Campaigns*, p. 8

terrorist organisation's DNA and, by and large, determine its outlook towards political integration. Accordingly, these factors may well indicate a situation in which terrorism is not serving the organisation's purposes anymore, that there are better and less costly means in hand, and that the use of violence is undermining other vital organisational or ideological interests.⁹³

The central interlinking factors are the *role of violence* and the *general perception of the opponent*. These two characteristics, which are manifested in the ideology and strategy of the organisation, according to Neumann, can illuminate its level of extremism or moderation and the likelihood of its participation in existing political institutions.⁹⁴ For example, if the use of terrorism is intended to accomplish specific strategic objectives and is limited both in its scope and its choice of targets, this can be viewed as a sympathetic world view. Moreover, in cases where a terrorist organisation accepts its opponent's right to exist as a legitimate actor, although not its claim for power or place in the political order, it would be reasonable to argue that given appropriate rewards and assurances political integration is indeed a feasible outcome. However, when a terrorist organisation is strongly committed to the complete annihilation of its opponent or its expulsion from a certain territory, political integration is not likely to take place.

The next factor is the occurrence of an *internal split in the ranks* of a terrorist organisation. More often than not, ideological and strategic divisions within a terrorist organisation takes place and result in a split and the formation of a more radical and competing dissident organisation. Lawrence Freedman supports this proposition and determines that 'radical movements tend to fragment into competing factions,' and disagreements over political views or methods 'can quickly be magnified into fundamental differences of principle.'⁹⁵ When an original faction has to distinguish itself from an

⁹³ Kruglanski, Arie. "A Review of: 'The Minds of Terrorists and their Organizations'", *Democracy and Security* (2:1, 2006), pp. 163-168

⁹⁴ Neumann, "The Bullet and the Ballot Box", pp. 943-946

⁹⁵ Freedman, Lawrence. "Terrorism as a Strategy", *Government and Opposition* (42:3, July 2007), pp. 322

adventurist splitting group, either to maintain the commitment of members or to mobilise more funds and public support, it is likely to endorse different methods of action or substitute strategy, which in turn points toward a degree of readiness to become a legitimate political actor.⁹⁶

The last factor is the *level of public support* that is provided to a terrorist organisation by members of its own constituency and by sympathizers worldwide. The material, political and morale support is the life-line for any terrorist organisation. Bart Schuurman suggests that in the study of terrorism and particularly of terrorist organisations, public support 'can be both a potent ally and a deadly foe,' and it can also contribute to the onset and escalation of violence or to the termination of hostilities.⁹⁷ Although it is socially isolated and bound to operate in clandestine, without popular support the organisation's ability to recruit, raise funds and receive logistical support is significantly curtailed.⁹⁸

The level of political and material support given to a terrorist organisation can affect its position, choice of strategy and goals. Although public support can be an outcome of or be influenced by other domestic and international factors, it is largely determined by the organisational policy and actions intended to mobilise people and promote their interests. Thus loss of public support and dwindling resources for the armed campaign may temper the actions of a terrorist organisation and presumably lead to an understanding that a different approach has to be taken in order to survive as a political entity.⁹⁹ Furthermore, according to Jones and Libicki, it seems that terrorist organisations with a 'more-ambivalent support network may be more likely to compromise.'¹⁰⁰ This assumption is supported by the notion that integration into political systems provides not only official recognition for a terrorist

⁹⁶ Irvin, p. 21

⁹⁷ Schuurman, Bart. "Defeated by Popular Demand: Public Support and Counterterrorism in Three Western Democracies, 1963-1998", *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* (36:2, 2013), p. 152

⁹⁸ Ganor, pp. 25-46

⁹⁹ O'Leary and Silke, pp. 397-398

¹⁰⁰ Jones and Libicki, p. 14

organisation, but also broadens its level of support and enables it to mobilise parts of the community that had not been involved or aware in the past.¹⁰¹

There is a wider range of factors that could have an impact on the integration of terrorist organisations into political integration (such as the nature of the leadership, cultural considerations, duration of the conflict, etc). However, the selected factors have been identified by scholars and practitioners as the most dominant in the process of terrorist's political integration. Therefore, testing them against the case studies can assist in determining the scope of their influence. Ultimately, if any influence is to be found in any given terrorist organisation, it would be reasonable to conclude that, at least from an organisational perspective, it is ready to undergo political integration. However, this process is subject to the presence of other factors, standing simultaneously or separately, at the state and systemic levels.

The second proposition relates to the domestic sphere where the conflict takes place, in which *states* (or semi-official sovereign entities) combat terrorist organisations. It suggests that their counter-terrorism policy has considerable impact on the likelihood of political integration. More specifically, the willingness of states to offer non-violent incentives to or negotiate with terrorist organisations is instrumental in their decision to integrate into legitimate political institutions.

Essentially, there are three types of policies that a state can implement to induce terrorist organisations to take the path of political integration. The first policy is to offer incentives, such as reduced prison sentences, clemency and financial rewards, to adhere to legitimate political activity. Crenshaw explains that using financial, legal or political incentives may convince terrorist organisations to adopt peaceful means without forsaking their ultimate goals.¹⁰²

The second policy is to bring a terrorist organisation to its knees by

¹⁰¹ Neumann, "The Bullet and the Ballot Box", p. 948

¹⁰² Crenshaw, "Pathways out of Terrorism: A Conceptual Framework", p. 9

employing an unyielding and forceful counter-terrorism policy against it. A strong response to terrorism is intended to completely eradicate the terrorist threat, to minimise the damage caused by terrorism or to prevent escalation in the level of violence.¹⁰³ To accomplish these goals, states, especially after the 9/11 attacks, have invested vast resources in strengthening their counter-terrorism capabilities, both military and legal, hoping that these steps will diminish the threat of violence and persuade terrorist organisations to adhere to peaceful political activity. However, this repressive approach may prove counter-productive and generate a more hard-line terrorist strategy that suppresses the organisation's readiness to compromise and consider political accommodation.¹⁰⁴

A third policy, which in a way combines the two previous ones, involves negotiating with terrorist organisations whilst fighting their violent campaigns, which are kept in reserve as a viable option should the talks render futile. This policy was famously adopted by the Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, who declared that he would 'fight terrorism as if there is no peace process; [and] pursue peace as if there is no terrorism.'¹⁰⁵ This approach entails a state holding talks with terrorists and at the same time executing an aggressive counter-terrorism strategy against them. According to Joshua Sinai, in doing so a state would be setting 'a mix of military and political measures, with the crucial component being a political resolution of the conflict's underlying causes.'¹⁰⁶ According to this view, it is not sufficient for a state to deal militarily with the terrorist activity and infrastructure, but rather it is necessary to concentrate efforts and resources to address the political roots of terrorism as well. William Zartman fully supports this notion, and argues that for any state that wishes to resolve its terrorist problem, 'the key to handling terror is not simply in countering it with effective counter-terrorism tactics but in undercutting it with

¹⁰³ Ganor, p. 26

¹⁰⁴ Gunning, Jeroen. "Peace with Hamas?", *International Affairs* (80:2, March 2004), pp. 233-255

¹⁰⁵ Karon, Tony. "Israel Peace Talks Aren't a Reward for Terror", *Time* (10/4/2002); <http://www.time.com/time/printout/0,8816,229868,00.html> (accessed 27/4/2007)

¹⁰⁶ Sinai, Joshua. "A Conflict Resolution-based Approach to Re-solving Protracted Terrorist Insurgencies", in Germani and Kaarthikeyan (eds.), p. 12

effective offers that remove its support and its cause.'¹⁰⁷

The last proposition relates to the *international system*, and asserts that events and processes that occur on a global scale affect terrorist considerations, calculations and attitude towards a peaceful settlement. This assertion is supported by Cronin, who argues that the 'international context directly affects the degree to which terrorist campaigns are "ripe" for resolution.'¹⁰⁸ The systemic influence can be broadly divided into three main sub-categories: (a) pivotal events that entail global magnitude and implications on power-politics and world order, (b) decline in state sponsorship for terrorist organisations, and (c) the involvement of international institutions.

The first sub-category holds that international events that generate overwhelming global implications can, directly and indirectly, give way for preferring peaceful settlements over armed struggles. To demonstrate this argument one can look at the end of the Cold War and the 9/11 attacks, as critical events that positively contributed to terrorists' adoption of political action. Contrary to the hostile international environment that dominated the Cold War, it is often argued that in the post-Cold War period, 'more conflicts ended in negotiated settlements than in the defeat and destruction of the violent challenger.'¹⁰⁹ Statistical studies from 1999 indicating a significant downward trend in the number of terrorist attacks in the post Cold War period, strengthen the notion that the end of the Cold War also had a moderating effect on terrorists' willingness to use violence.¹¹⁰

To emphasise the influence of key international events on terrorists' approach towards political integration, one can look at the 9/11 attacks as another landmark with immense implications. Essentially, the attacks

¹⁰⁷ Zartman, William. "Managing Terrorism and Insurgency through Peace Processes: Options for the Future", in Germani and Kaarthikeyan (eds.), p. 42

¹⁰⁸ Cronin, *How Terrorism Ends: Understanding the Decline and Demise of Terrorist Campaigns*, p. 70

¹⁰⁹ Crenshaw, "Pathways out of Terrorism: A Conceptual Framework", p. 3

¹¹⁰ Enders, Walter and Sandler, Todd. "Transnational Terrorism in the Post-Cold War Era", *International Studies Quarterly* (43:1, March 1999), pp. 145-167

'transformed our understanding of the threats posed by terrorist and paramilitary groups,' and had significant impact on the international attitude and tolerance towards political violence.¹¹¹ Although terrorist integration into political systems in other contexts may have occurred in any case, the 9/11 attacks made it far more likely as it 'did much to delegitimise all groups who use violence for political purposes,' and eventually led to 'widespread revulsion against political violence...[and] pressure to negotiate instead of fighting.'¹¹² The 9/11 attacks also led to more hard-line counter-terrorism policies employed by states. The attacks convinced numerous Western governments that some of the terrorists' demands are in effect non-negotiable. Consequently, many governments became more aggressive in their dealings with terrorists and adopted more interventionist foreign and security policies. Primarily, they have increased their counter-terrorism efforts to thwart attacks 'by improving intelligence, infiltrating terrorist groups, securing vulnerable points, and augmenting antiterrorist forces.'¹¹³

The second sub-category deriving from systemic impact is the decline in state sponsorship for terrorist originations. States and terrorist organisations enjoy a symbiotic relationship. According to Byman, states use terrorist organisations as proxies to serve their strategic interests, and in return terrorist organisations enjoy generous ideological, military, financial, logistical and diplomatic support.¹¹⁴ Despite the significant changes in international power-politics since the early 1990s, state sponsorship 'still plays a major role for many terrorist groups today.'¹¹⁵ Nonetheless, after 9/11 the international perception of states that directly or indirectly provide any kind of support for terrorists changed and they have since become targets of a forceful

¹¹¹ Kennedy-Pipe, Caroline. "From war to uneasy peace in Northern Ireland", in Cox, Michael, et.al (eds.) *A Farewell to Arms? Beyond the Good Friday Agreement* (Manchester:Manchester University Press, 2006), p. 41

¹¹² Willetts, Peter. "Transnational Actors and International Organisations in Global Politics", in Baylis and Smith (eds.), pp. 433-434

¹¹³ Enders and Sandler, p. 146

¹¹⁴ Byman, Daniel. *Deadly Connections: States that Sponsor Terrorism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005)

¹¹⁵ Ibid, p. 2

international effort to fight terrorism. Shortly after 9/11, US President, George W. Bush declared that 'From this day forward, any nation that continues to harbour or support terrorism will be regarded by the United States as a hostile regime.'¹¹⁶ Evidently, the US, and many of its allies, chose to 'adopt a policy of preemption against both state and non-state actors who pose immediate threats,' as seen in the military campaigns in the aftermath of 9/11.¹¹⁷ Although states that actively and passively sponsor terrorism still exist, chief amongst them are Iran, Syria, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, the number of such states is declining.¹¹⁸ The immediate effect of severing the relations between terrorist organisations and their patrons is the realisation that without state-support a terrorist organisation is not likely to survive for long unless it chooses an alternative course of action.

The last systemic sub-category is the significant role of international institutions or other third-party mediators in encouraging moderation and promoting a peaceful settlement to conflicts between terrorist organisations and states.¹¹⁹ The focus of this sub-category is primarily, but not exclusively, on the UN as the international body responsible for maintaining international peace and security. In addition to its recognition as a collectively neutral organisation, UN involvement provides a degree of legitimacy to the actors with which it is dealing. By operating peacekeeping missions, administering free elections, and granting official status to political entities, UN active involvement can serve as a crucial catalyst for terrorist political integration. In recent years, the UN has held a much more active role in mediation and peacemaking in many conflicts, and this trend does not go unnoticed when it comes to its influence on the actions and behaviour of terrorist organisations.¹²⁰ Additionally, dominant states or international institutions that maintain global

¹¹⁶ Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People (Washington DC, 20/9/2001); <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html> (accessed 10/10/2007)

¹¹⁷ Crenshaw, "Pathways out of Terrorism: A Conceptual Framework", p. 3

¹¹⁸ Byman, pp. 3-4

¹¹⁹ O'Leary and Sikle, p. 420-422

¹²⁰ Wilkinson, pp. 49-60

interests can play a constructive role in brokering a political settlement with terrorist organisations.

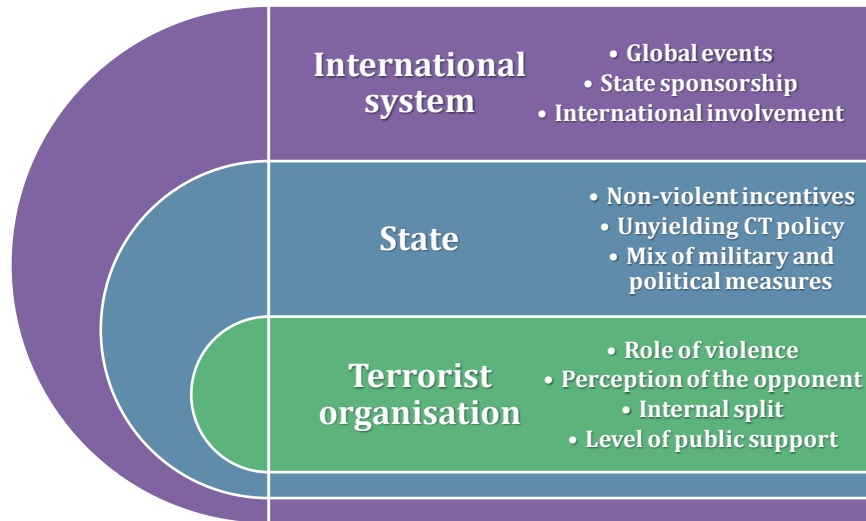


Figure 2: Parameters for analysis of terrorists' political integration

In conclusion, exploring and analysing the three research propositions and the respective case studies will provide a solid theoretical framework to describe and explain how and why terrorist organisations decide to integrate into political systems (see figure 2). Ultimately, all of them will feed into the principal argument that suggests that it is possible to identify terrorist organisations that are likely to take part in a legitimate political process, to analyse how this transformation might take place, and to suggest the likely form it will take.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this research is to explore how and why terrorist organisations integrate into political systems, by employing a *comparative multiple case study* approach. Although, there is potential confusion between "comparative" and "case study" methods, Alexander George and Andrew Bennett, in their seminal work on the use of case studies in social science, stress that 'there is growing consensus that the strongest means of drawing inferences from case studies is the use of a combination of within-case analyses

and cross-case comparisons.'¹²¹ Such qualitative method is common in contemporary research relating to peace and war studies that aim to 'produce casual explanation based on a logically coherent theoretical argument that generates testable implications.'¹²²

To achieve the research objectives, the author will use the *levels of analysis* comparative approach to investigate the observed phenomenon through *organisational*, *state* and *international system* standpoints. Originally used by Kenneth Waltz as a structural-realist theory to examine and explain the nature of world politics from three interdependent, yet different, perspectives: the state-system, the state and the individual, this approach offers an analytical concept to explore the behaviour of physical or social phenomena through looking at both the macro as well as the micro levels.¹²³ This approach can provide a broad understanding of terrorist integration into political systems, by focusing on several objects of analysis and exploring the links and possible interdependence between them.

To test the central propositions, this research will employ a case study design that has become a popular concept used in the social sciences. This approach is defined by Colin Robson as a 'strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence.'¹²⁴ A case study method is based on an in-depth examination from multiple perspectives of a phenomenon of scientific interest, to generate, develop or test explanations, policies or actions that may be generalised to other events.¹²⁵ Robert Yin points

¹²¹ George, Alexander and Bennett, Andrew. *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004), p. 18

¹²² Levy, Jack. "Case Studies: Types, Designs, and Logics of Inference", *Conflict Management and Peace Science* (25:1, February 2008), p. 2

¹²³ Waltz, Kenneth. *Man, the State and War: A Theoretical Analysis* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1959)

¹²⁴ Robson, Colin. *Real World Research: A Resource for Social Scientists and Practitioner-Researchers* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), p. 178

¹²⁵ More detailed analyses of the case study approach can be found in: George, Alexander and Bennett, Andrew. *Case Studies and Theory Development in the Social Sciences* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004); Scholz, Ronald & Tietje, Olaf. *Embedded Case Study Methods* (London: Sage Publications, 2002); Thomas, Gary. *How to do Your Case Study* (London: Sage Publications,

out that although case study research 'remains one of the most challenging of all social science endeavors,' this explicit methodology has the ability to answer *why* and *how* research questions, as well as the potential to explain or evaluate a particular phenomenon.¹²⁶

Formulating a research design that involves multiple case studies of terrorist organisations that have had different levels of political integration has the potential to produce more precise and valid findings that make sense beyond a specific case. Such method is well suited to 'make an assessment of the comparability of the cases much more systematic and defensible.'¹²⁷ George and Bennett highlight the advantages of the multiple-case studies method in testing propositions; amongst them is the high conceptual validity and usefulness in examining causal mechanisms in detail.¹²⁸ Similarly, Yin stresses that the 'evidence from multiple cases is often considered more compelling, and the overall study is therefore regarded as being more robust.'¹²⁹

CASE SELECTION

The purpose of this study is to make sense of the most dominant factors, circumstances and dynamics of how and why terrorist organisations integrate into political systems by using comparative multiple case study analysis. Despite the apparent strengths of such method, there are several limitations, most common of which are selection bias and the challenge of making generalisation, which could undermine the validity of any qualitative research, and particularly one that deals with terrorist organisations. Weinberg agrees that 'generalising about terrorist groups is virtually impossible,' yet he argues that by moving from the micro to the macro 'observers lose details but derive

2011), Yin, Robert. *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2009).

¹²⁶ Yin, Robert. *Case Study Research: Design and Methods* (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2009), pp. 3-10

¹²⁷ George, Alexander and McKeown, Timothy. "Case Studies and Theories of Organizational Decision Making", *Advances in Information Processing in Organizations* (Vol. 2, 1985), p. 41

¹²⁸ George and Bennett, pp. 19-22

¹²⁹ Yin, p. 53

benefit from understanding what is usually true about the subject under investigation.'¹³⁰

To overcome these limitations, George and Bennet assert that the chosen cases 'must all be instances of one phenomenon,' and emphasise that 'a well-defined research objective and an appropriate research strategy,' should guide the selection process and the analysis of the case studies.¹³¹ Furthermore, Alexander George and Timothy McKeown acknowledge the difficulty in making causal inferences in case studies analyses, yet they argue that if 'sensible methodological criteria are applied to the performance of cases, the risks inherent in such inferences can be reduced to a manageable level.'¹³² The importance of a solid theoretical framework for case selection is also stressed by Yin, who argues that when cases have different settings and contexts it is necessary to state the conditions under which a particular phenomenon – in this case terrorist integration into political systems – is likely to be found.¹³³

Following the development of precise and specific research propositions, *three* case studies of terrorist organisations which had different degrees of political integration were selected. Evidently, there is no agreement in the existing literature on the number of cases that should be selected in a multiple case study design; rather that they should reflect a 'trade-off between the breadth and depth of the case study inquiry.'¹³⁴ In his latest work, Yin explains that selection of three case studies is sufficient for the establishment of replication and to providing compelling support for the initial set of the propositions.¹³⁵ Furthermore, the author considers that an in-depth analysis of three cases to be a sensible number given the study's word limit and the need

¹³⁰ Weinberg, *The End of Terrorism?*, pp. 16-17

¹³¹ George and Bennett, p. 69

¹³² George and McKeown, p. 54

¹³³ Yin, Robert. (3rd ed.) *Applications of Case Study Research* (London: Sage Publications Ltd., 2012), pp. 17-18

¹³⁴ Patton, Michael Quinn. *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods* (London: Sage Publications Ltd., 2002), cited in Shakir, Maha. "The Selection of Case Studies: Strategies and their Application to IS Implementation Cases Studies", *Research Letters in Information and Mathematical Sciences* (Vol. 3, 2002), p. 194

¹³⁵ Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, pp. 54-59

to trace common patterns and key factors that explain how and why terrorist organisations integrate into political systems.

The three case studies are, therefore, selected on the basis of the presence of the following criteria: 1) no direct influence of one case on another; 2) not part of the same conflict; 3) different religious, cultural and political contexts; 3) variation in the period in time; and 4) different geographical location; 5) variation in ideological and strategic objectives; 6) degree of political integration; and 7) success in achieving strategic objectives.¹³⁶ The guiding rationale for formulating these criteria is to cover, as widely as possible, various independent variables that most effectively reflect different cases of terrorist's political integration. In addition to the qualitative criteria, the author also took into consideration the access to potential data and amount of previous scholarly works as factors that affect the selection of cases.

From an initial list of approximately 40 incidents of terrorist organisation that underwent political integration, only the major ones were considered (in terms of the scope of available information) and eventually three cases were selected to be presented in greater depth. Although each of the three case studies entails its own unique characteristics, the above mentioned criteria 'adequately reflect the research objectives and the theoretical focus of the study,' and enable to test the research propositions and to provide enough commonalities to present a robust set of general principles and conclusions.¹³⁷ On the basis of these criteria, the following case studies had been chosen (see figure 3):

A. The Irgun

A secular Jewish terrorist organisation that was established in 1937, and whose primary ideological objective, to drive out the British forces from Palestine and establish an independent Jewish state, was successfully achieved

¹³⁶ Some of the criteria are based on Ashley, Laura Day. "Case Study Research", in Arthur, James, et. al. *Research Methods & Methodologies in Education* (London: Sage Publications Ltd. 2012), pp. 102-106

¹³⁷ George and McKeown, p. 43

in 1948. Although theoretically there was no longer justification for its continued existence, its leaders wished to maintain a separate military wing and initially rejected the possibility of political integration. Subsequently, only after aggressive response by the newly-created regime, changes in the surrounding political framework and international recognition, the Irgun agreed to abandon its separatist strategy, to decommission its arms and to form a legitimate political party, which years later won the national parliamentary elections.

Perhaps because the Irgun was completely dismantled long ago, and its commander during its terrorist days, Menachem Begin, served as Israel's Prime Minister between 1977 and 1983, it is often overlooked in the existing terrorism literature. Likewise, its contribution to the establishment of the State of Israel has been marginalised in the Israeli narrative and collective memory. Therefore, there is significant potential merit in investigating a terrorist organisation that operated during the time of the Second World War, fought against the forces of the British Empire and ultimately continued to promote its ideology and objectives exclusively through its political wing.

B. The Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF)

A Protestant-loyalist terrorist organisation that was active since the 1960s and advocated against the unification of Northern Ireland with the Republic of Ireland. Although the UVF's stated objective has been successfully accomplished with the revival of self-rule in Northern Ireland, the electoral success of its political wing was at best marginal. Due to the diminishing public in its violent campaign and the determination to remain a vital and constructive actor in the Northern Ireland politics, the UVF had no other choice but to announce in May 2007, that it will cease to exist as a terrorist organisation, store its arms and continue its operations through its political party, thus completing its process towards political integration.

While studies of the violence during the Northern Ireland conflict largely focus on the Catholic IRA, an understanding of the strategy and actions of the UVF is relatively lacking. As a pro-state organisation active in the heart of

Western Europe, that on one hand supported the UK but on the other was equally persecuted by the British security forces as the IRA, a study of the UVF could underscore new insights that are relevant for terrorist political integration.

C. Hizballah

A religious Shiite-Lebanese organisation that was established in 1982 and nowadays is undoubtedly the most formidable terrorist organisation operating in Lebanon and possibly the strongest non-state actor active today. The organisation is committed to spreading the Iranian Islamic revolution, destruction of Israel and the foundation of an Islamist state in Lebanon. Although Hizballah joined Lebanon's political system in 1992 and it serves as a legitimate political actor, it still holds independent weapons arsenal and continues to be involved in terrorist and military actions. Over the past two years the organisation has been heavily involved in the Syrian civil war, which has eroded its military and political powers and may impact its future decisions and standing in Lebanon. Since Hizballah's power struggle still continues today, the scope of this study is limited to the period from the establishment of the organisation until the beginning of 2013.

Certainly Hizballah has been a subject for countless of academic and professional writing, mainly due to the magnitude of its terrorist attacks and its political and military prowess. However, of the three terrorist organisations that were selected as case studies, Hizballah is the only one that is still active and that its political integration has yet to be completed. Indeed, Hizballah represents a dual-strategy model in which a terrorist organisation chooses to advance its interests through agitation in both the political and armed conflict arenas. Therefore, a research dealing with terrorist political integration must include an in-depth analysis of Hizballah's dual strategy, in order to explore why it still maintains a separate armed wing and whether and it is likely to exclusively adopt peaceful means in the future.

	The Irgun	Ulster Volunteer Force	Hizballah
Conflict	Jewish community in Mandatory Palestine vs. British Empire	Northern Ireland Protestants vs. Northern Ireland Catholics and British security services	Lebanon, Syria and Iran vs. Israel
Time period	1937-1948	1966-2007	1982-present
Geographic location	Mandatory Palestine	Northern Ireland	Israel-Lebanon
Religion	Jewish	Christian	Muslim
Objective	Evacuation of British presence from Palestine and establishment of an independent Jewish state	Maintaining the link between the UK and Northern Ireland	Destruction of Israel and the establishment of Islamic nation in Lebanon
Level of political integration	Forming a political party that ultimately won parliamentary elections	Associated with a political party that had marginal electoral and political success	Forming a political party that served in a governmental coalition while maintaining independent armed capabilities
Success in accomplishing objectives	Complete success British forces withdrew and a Jewish state was established	Complete success Northern Ireland's constitutional link with the UK maintained	Partial success Israel still exists Lebanon remains a secular state but the organisation won significant political power

FIGURE 3: CRITERIA FOR CASE SELECTION

Clearly there are other prominent cases of terrorist integration into political systems, most notably are the IRA and Hamas. These organisations received extensive publicity in local and international politics, academia and media, and due to objective and subjective constraints they will not be examined individually in this research. In the case of the IRA, indeed it attracted massive scholarly and media attention, and almost every organisational aspect of its activity, including its political transformation, has been already explored and widely discussed. Therefore, given that the main objective of this research is to shed new light over the phenomenon, the IRA will not be explored as a separate case study. As for Hamas, it represents a relatively new development (since January 2006) and its political integration is still ongoing. Moreover, in light of recent events in the Israel-Palestine conflict, namely the latest military confrontation between Israel and Hamas and the Palestinian acceptance as a non-member state at the UN (both took place in November 2012), as well as the American renewed efforts to broker a peace agreement (that began in mid-

2013), it is still premature for Hamas to be evaluated and conclusions to be drawn. There is a need for more extended timeframe.

Additionally, the author is aware of other cases of terrorist integration that had different levels of political integration, but would not be discussed in this study, each for its own reasons, such as: the Colombian M-19 that conducted several violent campaigns in the 1970s and 1980s but in the face of dwindling public support and military defeats accepted the government's offer and replaced the gun with the ballot box; the Uruguayan Tupamaros that transformed from a violent group into a peaceful political party and whose members were elected for public office; the powerful ETA that was responsible for the deaths of hundreds of people but ultimately decided to use the Spanish democratic system to pursue its demand for Basque independence; the Palestinian Fatah movement that was committed to the destruction of Israel, yet in the 1990s signed a peace treaty with Israel (through its umbrella organisation the PLO), which enabled the formation of a Palestinian Authority in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank; and finally the ANC that carried out terrorist attacks through its military wing the "Spear of the Nation" and in the post-Apartheid democratic system became South-Africa's ruling party.¹³⁸

A comparative multiple case study design also raises the 'question of the extent to which the research findings can be generalised to a wider population beyond the case study itself.'¹³⁹ To this end, the author is fully aware that a researcher who studies a case in one context 'must resist the temptation to make any kind of general claims about its relevance and applicability.'¹⁴⁰ Since every terrorist organisation that would be explored in this study operates in different historical, geographical, social, cultural and political circumstances, it is clear that lessons learned from one complex and protracted conflict cannot

¹³⁸ For further reading on these organisations in the context of their political integration, see Weinberg, Leonard and Pedahzur, Ami. *Political Parties and Terrorist Groups* (Oxon: Routledge, 2009) and Weinberg, Leonard. *The End of Terrorism?* (Oxon: Routledge, 2012)

¹³⁹ Burton, Dawn. "The Use of Case Studies in Social Science Research", in Burton, Dawn (ed.) *Research Training for Social Scientists* (London: Sage Publications Ltd. 2000), p. 224

¹⁴⁰ Coe, Robert, J. "Conducting your research", in Arthur, James, et. al. *Research Methods & Methodologies in Education* (London: Sage Publications Ltd. 2012), p. 49

be deployed in their entirety to another.¹⁴¹ In general, it is difficult to argue that one terrorist organisation can be representative of another. Therefore, the purpose of the study is to examine three case studies and formulate analytic generalisations to establish a logical understanding of the process that might be applicable to other terrorist organisations.¹⁴² Jack Levy supports this objective and asserts that there is a growing consensus among qualitative researchers that the case study approach incorporates multiple and complementary methods and therefore serves as a primary vehicle 'for constructing and supporting broader theoretical generalisations.'¹⁴³

In particular, the author is aware that two of the selected case studies are involved in conflicts in which Israel has some part of, and this may raise, again, the issue of generalisation. However, a wider look reveals that the organisational and international contexts, as well as the ideologies and objectives are fundamentally different and that in each case Israel had employed a different counter-terrorism approach.¹⁴⁴ More specifically, in the case of the Irgun, Israel was not yet an official state but a mandate and the Irgun's main protagonist was the UK; regarding Hizballah, Israel consistently implemented an aggressive counter-terrorism policy, although at times it held tactical negotiations with the Lebanese terrorist organisation.

Overall, this study cannot claim to present a universal analysis of every terrorist organisation's integration into political systems, but it does seek to identify the dominant patterns and common conditions that may lead to such an outcome. To that end, the selection of case studies is 'guided not by their representativeness of some wider group, but for their potential to contribute information in their own right: their ability to provoke new insights,

¹⁴¹ Trimble, David. *Misunderstanding Ulster* (London: CFI, 2007)

¹⁴² Yin, *Applications of Case Study Research*, p. 18

¹⁴³ Levy, p. 14

¹⁴⁴ For further reading on counter-terrorism strategies see Ganor, Boaz. *The Counter-Terrorism Puzzle: A Guide for Decision Makers* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2005)

understandings, connections and explanations.'¹⁴⁵

DATA COLLECTION

This study bases its findings on both traditional literary research as well as electronic sources, in order to have a complete overview of the available scholarship on the topic. The variety of sources, that includes both primary texts such as archival material, official documents, and intelligence reports, together with secondary sources, provide an insight that has not been presented in a similar fashion. A wide range of sources, almost entirely but not exclusively in English and Hebrew, is used to establish solid research propositions. The majority of the sources are either institutional or documentary, mostly books, journal articles, reports and other material produced by mass media. Occasionally, primary sources, such as personal documents (diaries, memoirs, letters and autobiographies), as well as governmental and other official texts, will be also examined. Distinctively, in researching and analysing the case studies, the author will use primarily archival material, memoranda, newspapers, biographies and original texts published by terrorist organisations, governmental and institutional reports.

Another significant primary data collection measure employed is individual interviews with members in the observed terrorist organisations or state officials that dealt with them. This method enables researchers 'to see the world through their [the interviewees] eyes,' and to better understand processes and events from a personal account.¹⁴⁶ The conduct of interviews is a supplementary research technique, intended to test the research propositions and to provide greater data through personal reflections and perspectives on issues that previously did not receive sufficient emphasis. The interviews were timed and designed as unstructured and informal sessions to create an open and relaxing environment. Furthermore, all interviews were audio-taped and

¹⁴⁵ Coe, p. 49

¹⁴⁶ Corbetta, Piergiorgio. *Social Research: Theory, Methods and Techniques* (London: Sage Publications Ltd. 2003), p.264

could be later transcribed for accurate quotation purposes.

As for the ethical considerations, the research has been conducted in accordance with the ethical principles of King's College Research Ethics Committee (<http://www.kcl.ac.uk/research/ethics/crec/>) and the rights of the interviewees and their anonymity are fully protected. Their names will not be disclosed unless previously approved by the individual participants. All interviewees have been asked to sign a standard consent form that legally serves as contract, ensuring their rights and the author's ethical responsibility.

LIMITATIONS

Throughout this study there are four primary limitations; three objective and one subjective, which pertain to the validity of the research. The objective limitations relate to the wealth of written sources, access to and availability of interviewees and language barrier. As discussed earlier, despite the breadth of literature written on terrorism issues, the specific phenomenon in the heart of this study is surprisingly under-researched. As such, not all information has been disclosed and some aspects and processes have not yet been discussed. Moreover, the author is consciously aware of the fact that his nationality served as an obstacle in gaining access to relevant locations such as Lebanon. The challenge of access to data sources and availability of interviewees is accurately described by Cronin:

Conducting primary research on contemporary terrorist groups is difficult because making contacts with operatives or their targets can be dangerous for both the researchers and their contacts. In addition, governments may restrict access to relevant written sources.¹⁴⁷

In addition, a case study analysis of Hizballah requires at least some reference to Arabic sources. However, the author has access to primary sources, such as governmental databases and personal documents that

¹⁴⁷ Cronin, "How al-Qaida Ends: The Decline and Demise of Terrorist Groups", p. 17

compensate for the territorial access and bridge the information gap.

The subjective limitation is linked with the Jewish background and Israeli perspectives instilled in the author, specifically with regards to Hizballah which is committed, at least rhetorically, to the destruction of Israel. In order to achieve greater validity and to minimise the damage of biased views, particularly in interviews, special attention was given to the formulation of clear questions through pilot testing of the research tools, in order to minimise the possibility that they will serve to support the author's preconceived conceptions and notions.¹⁴⁸ Indeed, the author is fully aware of the problem of subjectivity, and although not much can be done to neutralise it, the study will uphold, as much as possible, an unbiased and balanced approach. Ultimately, the author believes that no research can be entirely objective, and that readers should take this into account.

RESEARCH OUTLINE

This study is structured with two parts; a thorough examination of the three underlying propositions followed by case studies review. This combined method was primarily chosen because of previously under-researched issues related to the subject of analysis, and the need to uncover new data and conclusions from existing and relevant models. Furthermore, to substantiate the findings, the study includes interviews with figures representing both the examined terrorist organisations and states, who either played an active role or influenced terrorist integration into political systems.

The research will comprise a total of five chapters – one introductory, three substantive case analyses and finally a concluding chapter. Following the first introductory chapter that outlines the conceptual framework and the research methodologies to be used throughout the study, chapters two to four provide an in-depth analysis of three distinct case studies aimed at testing the

¹⁴⁸ Cohen, Louis and Manion, Lawrence. *Research Methods in Education* (4th ed. London: Routledge, 1994), pp. 271-298

research formulated propositions. These chapters assist in understanding the organisational, domestic and international processes and dynamics, and the way they affect terrorist organisations' decisions to integrate into political systems. The concluding chapter synthesise the findings and identifies the factors that could be used as a guide for discerning future terrorist's political integration as a tool for achieving its strategic objectives.

CHAPTER 2: THE IRGUN



The *Irgun*, the principal Jewish terrorist organisation was active in Palestine during the 1930s and 1940s, and officially disbanded four months after the creation of the State of Israel in May 1948.¹⁴⁹ Despite the fact that a sovereign Jewish state had been established, and thus the Irgun's primary objective achieved, it was not at all clear after Israel's independence that the group would be dissolved—after all, goes the aphorism, terrorist organisations 'are often more difficult to dismantle than construct.'¹⁵⁰ Indeed, some elements in the Irgun wished to maintain its political status as well as its autonomous military capabilities and refused to decommission, even after Israel was established as a democratic state.¹⁵¹

The final stage in the progressive process during which the Irgun decided to abandon its violent strategy in favour of peaceful settlement was a violent clash, known as the *Altalena* incident, in June 1948 that led the Jewish community to the brink of civil war. After this momentous event, the Irgun was forced to end its independent military operations, to yield its arms to the incumbent government and to incorporate its separate units into the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). Furthermore, the Irgun formed a legitimate political wing that participated in the first legislative elections under the new democratic regime and won 14 out of 120 seats. In May 1977, twenty-nine years after the Irgun ceased its violent operations, its party won the parliamentary elections and the leader, Menachem Begin, was appointed as Prime Minister of Israel; the transition from underground violence to legitimate political activity was completed.

¹⁴⁹ The *Irgun* is the popular name of the Jewish resistance organisation "*Etzel*", which is the Hebrew acronym for Irgun Tzvai Leumi or in English National Military Organisation.

¹⁵⁰ Bell, John Bowyer. *Terror Out of Zion: The Fight for Israeli Independence* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1996), p. 316

¹⁵¹ *Ibid*, p. 340-343

For nearly two decades the Irgun dealt with three different protagonists: the British mandatory administration in Palestine,¹⁵² the official Jewish institutions commonly represented by the Jewish Agency,¹⁵³ and the Palestinian-Arab militants that perpetrated terrorist attacks against Jews; each was perceived and treated differently. The mandatory administration was seen as a temporary enemy separated from the British Government and public as a whole. Distinctively, the official Jewish authorities were largely seen as political rivals but at times also as partners. In contrast to the attacks on the British, violence against the Jewish authorities and their affiliated organisations was strictly forbidden despite the ideological and strategic disagreements. Palestinian Arabs were perceived as a permanent enemy, and when the armed campaign against the mandatory administration was temporarily frozen, attacks against Arabs continued at full pace. All together, the multiple actors that the Irgun had to deal with simultaneously made the transition from violence to politics more complicated.

THE IRGUN – ALTERNATIVE AND OPPOSITION

Before delving into the Irgun's transition from violence to legitimate politics, it is essential to provide a brief description of the ideology and historical background, leading to its February 1944 declaration of revolt against the British mandatory administration (see map 1).

The Irgun was the outcome of ideological and strategic disagreements within the Jewish community in Palestine, mainly over the appropriate response to Arab violence. In 1931 a group of commanders in the Jewish semi-

¹⁵² The *British Mandate of Palestine* was defined by the League of Nations in 1920. The British Government inherited the control over the territory from the defeated Ottoman Empire, and became responsible for the people living in an area that is comprised of modern-day Israel, Jordan and the Palestinian territories.

¹⁵³ The *official Jewish institutions* in Palestine were the authorised body to pursue political negotiations on behalf of the Jewish people and they operated under the approval and recognition of the British Government. They comprised of two principal elected bodies that were dominated by a socialist political thinking: National Committee – the representative body of Palestinian Jews; and Jewish Agency – the executive branch that acted as a quasi-government headed by David Ben-Gurion, later Israel's first premier.

military organisation, the "*Haganah*",¹⁵⁴ that opposed the powerlessness in response to the Arab riots in 1929, decided to form a new militarist organisation, the *Irgun*, to protect Jews against Arab violence and to promote the establishment of "Greater Israel" – an independent Jewish state on both sides of the Jordan River.¹⁵⁵ The political thinking of the *Irgun* rejected territorial minimalism and advocated militant operations for instantaneous solutions.¹⁵⁶

The *Irgun*'s underlying ideological conception was *active Zionism*,¹⁵⁷ calling for Jews to take destiny into their own hands by fighting for their rights and creating for themselves the conditions necessary for the re-establishment of their homeland. This philosophy was applied specifically to the situation in Palestine 'where we [Jews] face the entire world and demand our rights. No one can defend his rights unless he himself believes that this right is invincible.'¹⁵⁸ This proactive notion was in stark contrast to the Jewish Agency's belief that the creation of homeland for the Jews, as stipulated in the 1917 "Balfour Declaration",¹⁵⁹ could only be realised by a policy of self-restraint against Arab violence and maintaining good relations with the British Government in London.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁴ The *Haganah* (in English "Defence"), was established by the Zionist movement in February 1920. Its role was to serve as a national defence organisation to protect Jews against violent attacks carried out by outlaws inspired and guided by the Arab political establishment in Palestine. It was the foremost military organisation under the control of the Jewish Agency, and in 1948 it laid the foundations for the Israel Defense Force.

¹⁵⁵ The *Greater Israel* philosophy is the ideological basis of the political right in Israel.

¹⁵⁶ Shlaim, Avi. "The Likud in Power: The Historiography of Revisionist Zionism", *Israel Studies*, 1:2 (Fall 1996), p. 279-280

¹⁵⁷ *Zionism* is a political movement advocating for the establishment of a homeland to the Jewish people in the Land of Israel.

¹⁵⁸ Kister, Joseph. *The Irgun Zvai Leumi* (Tel Aviv: Ministry of Defence, 2000), p. 10

¹⁵⁹ The *Balfour Declaration* is a letter dated 2/11/1917 addressed to Lord Rothschild by the British Foreign Secretary, Arthur James Balfour, in which he promised the Jews a national home in Mandatory Palestine. Although the word "State" is not mentioned in the letter, the Jewish leadership acted as if this was the case. The declaration has been a source of escalating tension between Jews and Arabs in Palestine and prompted the frequent outbreak of hostilities.

¹⁶⁰ Lapidot, Yehuda. *The "Season": The confrontation between the Haganah and two Underground Organizations: Etzel and Lehi* (Tel Aviv: Jabotinsky Institute, 1994)



Source: Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, www.procon.org

Map 1: British Mandate of Palestine (1923)

The Irgun's Supreme Commander and main Revisionist ideologue, Ze'ev Jabotinsky,¹⁶¹ challenged the political wisdom of the official non-retaliation policy and encouraged the formation of a Hebrew military that would protect Jewish life and property.¹⁶² He also established a new Zionist youth movement in Europe, "*Betar*", to serve as an educational platform for creating a new type of a Jewish archetype – self-reliant, disciplined, and powerful – in contrast to his characterisation of the "ghetto Jews" of European Diaspora who were seen as weak, diffident, and submissive. "*Betar*" would later become a source of future immigrants to Palestine and new recruits for the Irgun.¹⁶³ Indeed, in criticising the passiveness of the recognised Jewish institutions and calling for active operations, Jabotinsky offered a viable – albeit more aggressive—opposition political ideology.

¹⁶¹ Ze'ev Jabotinsky founded in 1925 the *Revisionist Movement* that advocated for military struggle and a political effort to bring about the establishment of a sovereign Jewish state on both sides of the Jordan River. The Revisionist movement laid the ideological ground to the establishment and operation of the Irgun.

¹⁶² Pail, Meir and Yorman, Pinchas. *The Test of the Zionist Movement 1931-1948* (Tel Aviv: Cherikover Publishers, 2003)

¹⁶³ Markovitzky, Jacob. *The Etzel Lexicon* (Tel Aviv: Ministry of Defence, 2005), p. 29-35

Until the outbreak of World War II, the Irgun and the official Jewish bodies assumed that the British Government would fulfil its promise to establish a Jewish national home. Therefore, they were mostly preoccupied with Arab violence and assisting Jewish immigrants to safely reach the shores of Palestine. However, due to the eruption of the 1936 Arab Revolt in Palestine as well as events in Europe that ultimately led to a world war in September 1939, Britain decided to adopt a pro-Arab policy to appeal to the large Muslim population in the Middle-East. The new policy that was published in a 1939 "White Paper" included anti-Jewish measures, such as limited land purchase by Jews and severe restriction on Jewish immigration into Palestine.¹⁶⁴ The "White Paper" restrictions, which were compared by the Irgun to the Nuremberg Laws imposed on Jews by the Nazi regime in 1935, resulted in the imprisonment or deportation of thousands of Jews who escaped Europe and were caught by the British authorities.¹⁶⁵ Subsequently, many Palestinian Jews felt that the British political and moral commitment in support of the Zionist cause had been dealt a devastating blow.¹⁶⁶ In response, the Irgun decided to adopt a more militant attitude towards the mandatory administration that, for the time being, was mainly non-violent and included demonstrations, strikes and illegal immigration.

Although both the Jewish Agency and the Irgun were publicly committed to defending the infringed Jewish rights, the beginning of WWII and Britain's declaration of war against Germany, presented the Jewish community with a deep conflict. On one hand, it was steadfast in helping those who escaped Europe to enter Palestine by evading the British restrictions. On the other hand, it reasoned that fighting the British would indirectly assist the Nazi military effort, thus threatening Jewish hopes for a homeland in Palestine. Days after the beginning of WWII and intense deliberations, the Jewish Agency announced

¹⁶⁴ The 1939 *White Paper* limited Jewish immigration to Palestine to 75,000 people over the next five years. After that, the quota would depend upon Arab approval.

¹⁶⁵ JIA K4-1.2, 28/2/1940

¹⁶⁶ Ben-Ami, Yitshaq. *Years of Wrath, Days of Glory* (2nd ed. New York: Shengold Publishers, Inc., 1983), p.225

that Palestinian Jews will stand by Britain in its war against Nazi Germany. It also decided in favour of cooperation with Britain against the common enemy, announced a complete cessation of all Jewish resistance and recruited Jewish soldiers to fight alongside the British army in Europe.¹⁶⁷

Irgun leaders were confronted with a similar dilemma; they felt that supporting the British effectively recognised the "White Paper's" restrictions and betrayed the organisation's defining objective. Nevertheless, Jabotinsky decided to back Britain in its efforts to stop the German advance. The rationale behind his decision was 'the nature of the Nazi enemy that left the Jewish people no choice in the Second World War,' thus the Irgun 'had to be on the side of whoever was fighting Hitler.'¹⁶⁸ Consequently, on 9 September 1939, the Irgun issued its own statement that read: 'In order not to interfere with the war against Germany and to devote as many forces as possible to help England and its allies, the Irgun has decided to stop its offensive actions in Palestine.'¹⁶⁹

The Irgun's cooperation with Britain, despite the fact that immigration and land purchase restrictions were still in effect, was not merely a rhetorical statement – it was translated into actions when 3,500 Irgun members joined the British army.¹⁷⁰ The Irgun commander at that time, David Raziel, at the request of the British military command, even led a sabotage and intelligence-gathering mission against the pro-Nazi elements in Iraq.¹⁷¹ The Irgun's realisation that it would be 'mad to oppose Hitler's most effective enemy,' is a prime illustration of its rational and pragmatist perspectives.¹⁷²

Since the cessation of the armed struggle against the British rule in Palestine the Irgun had fallen into disarray. The calculated decision inflicted dire consequences on the Irgun's political stature, public image and operational

¹⁶⁷ Lev-Ami, Shlomo. *By Struggle and by Revolt: Haganah, Irgun and Lehi* (Tel Aviv: Ministry of Defence, 1979), pp. 130-132

¹⁶⁸ Katz, Samuel. *Days of Fire* (London: W.H.Allen & Co., 1968), p. 46

¹⁶⁹ Lev-Ami, p. 132

¹⁷⁰ Interview with Shlomo Lev-Ami, 4/11/2007, Tel Aviv, Israel

¹⁷¹ David Raziel, the Irgun's commander between 1938-1941, was killed during this mission by an aerial assault of a German plane on 20 May 1941.

¹⁷² Bell, p. 51

capability. Binyamin Eliav, a senior Irgun activist, wrote that apart from Raziel's mission in Iraq, the British authorities assumed that the Irgun ceased to exist since it was no longer operational.¹⁷³ Samuel Katz, the Irgun's spokesperson and member of its High Command, admits that although choosing to support Britain was the right thing to do under the circumstances, it 'was the central source of our political weakness and of our sustained political defeats during the war.'¹⁷⁴ Despite the Irgun's grim situation, the truce was firmly kept and no violent attacks were perpetrated against British personnel between September 1939 and February 1944.

The first evidence of the Nazi systematic extermination of European Jewry reached Palestine in late 1943. Although it was clear that Germany's defeat was just a matter of time, the British Government refused to revoke the immigration restrictions desperately needed to save the Jewish people. Consequently, the Irgun's ranks began to show their discontent from the decision to side with Britain. In December 1943, a new Irgun High Command headed by Menachem Begin was formed. Although Begin had no formal military training, Bruce Hoffman argues that he:

...possessed an uncanny analytical ability to cut right to the heart of an issue and an intuitive sense about the interplay of violence, politics and propaganda that ideally qualified him to lead a terrorist organisation.¹⁷⁵

Under Begin's leadership, the Irgun decided to break the temporary solidarity with the Jewish Agency and to re-establish its independence and more confrontational posture vis-à-vis the mainstream Jewish community. On 1 February 1944, the armistice with Britain ended when the Irgun officially declared a revolt against the mandatory administration stating that:

There can no longer be a truce between the Hebrew nation...and the British administration of Eretz Israel, which is betraying our

¹⁷³ Eliav, Binyamin. *Memories* (Tel Aviv: Am-Oved Publishers, 1990), p. 151

¹⁷⁴ Katz, p. 46

¹⁷⁵ Hoffman, pp. 47-48

brethren to Hitler. Our nation will fight this regime, fight to the end! Every Jew in our homeland will fight!¹⁷⁶

In his memoirs, Begin explained that the circumstances leading to the revolt were the Holocaust and the continuing British anti-Jewish policy 'coming simultaneously and in their very coincidence threatening to strangle the hopes of Israel and utterly to destroy the Jewish people – determined the moment for its outbreak.'¹⁷⁷ In ordering an armed campaign against the British presence in Palestine, Begin calculated that the mandatory administration would be 'forced to negotiate with the rebels and to transfer the country to "its Hebrew owners"'.¹⁷⁸ Subsequently, shortly after the revolt declaration the Irgun carried out terrorist and guerrilla attacks against British civilian and military infrastructures in Palestine, inflicting numerous casualties.

The armed campaign provoked anger and animosity towards the Irgun among the official Jewish institutions, fearing that it would gravely damage both the relations with the British Government and the Zionist cause. The British had their own reasons to oppose the revolt, as they were concerned that the Irgun's violence could spark a much larger Jewish rebellion. Therefore, by February 1944 the Irgun faced two formidable powers; both the Jewish Agency, via its military wing the Haganah, and the British Empire, who were willing to do whatever was necessary to destroy it, employing either negotiations or coercive measures.

¹⁷⁶ The Irgun website: <http://www.etzel.org.il/english/index.html> (accessed 23/10/2007)

¹⁷⁷ Begin, Menachem. *The Revolt: Story of the Irgun* (Jerusalem: Steimatzky, 1952), p. 39

¹⁷⁸ Heller, Joseph. *The Birth of Israel, 1945-1949* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2000), p. 268

ORGANISATIONAL FACTORS

ROLE OF VIOLENCE

In correlation with the Irgun's activism and militancy, violence was to become a central method in accomplishing the principal objectives that were described in details in the "Commander's Briefcase"; an authoritative guidebook for every commander that portrays the organisation's ideological objectives: the return of the Jewish people to its homeland, the creation of an independent and sovereign Jewish state, and the establishment of a Hebrew regime that upholds civil rights and social justice.¹⁷⁹ According to this *raison d'être*, the Irgun saw violence as instrumental and the most effective way to achieve its objectives. The Irgun embraced violence so strongly because of its utility, but at the same time, the organisation was ready to abandon violence if it ceased to advance its objectives. This pragmatic nature is much-needed for a terrorist organisation to renounce violence and adopt legal political activity.

The ideological source for the use of violence appears in the second chapter of the "Commander's Briefcase" that deals with the Irgun's strategy and provides the justification for violence:

We realised that the only way to liberate our country is with a sword...there is no other way but liberation war...a national liberation war is a just war, conducted by an oppressed people against foreign occupier that has enslaved it and its country...the Irgun is the liberation army of the people of Israel.¹⁸⁰

Clearly, the Irgun's ideology legitimised violent operations against the British mandate, targeting not only its symbols of governance but also non-military infrastructure and civilians. Shlomo Lev-Ami, former deputy commander of the Irgun who was interviewed for this research, believes that 'human beings were neither created to kill nor to be killed,' but since the British

¹⁷⁹ JIA K4-9.1.12, 1947, pp. 1-10

¹⁸⁰ Ibid, pp. 10-12

repression was arbitrary the 'Irgun had no other choice than to respond violently to defend the Jewish community.'¹⁸¹

The willingness to use violence by itself is not indicative of any prospects for political integration. However, contrary to other modern terrorist organisations, the Irgun's attitude towards violence reveals a great deal of moral reservations and self-restraint that was typical in its operations.

When it was required to address the issue of using violence against civilians, the Irgun published numerous broadsheets aimed at convincing the Jewish community and the international public opinion that its members are not terrorists. One of them read: 'We are not terrorists; we are workers, farmers, students, doctors, lawyers; our belief is Zion and our way is war but not killing; human life is sacred for us.'¹⁸² Lev-Ami recalls that although some members advocated extreme measures, he imposed moral boundaries that strictly prohibited deliberate killing of civilians, to distinguish the Irgun from other revolutionary organisations: 'we risked our lives but we did not target civilians...for the world to accept us and not interfering by declaring a total war against us it was necessary to act as true idealists.'¹⁸³

In the "Commander's Briefcase", an entire chapter is dedicated to the personal virtues required from Irgun members. Amongst them are nobility and courtesy, generosity, integrity and incorruptibility, courage, self-sacrifice and respect.¹⁸⁴ Also, in order to avoid random fire-fights and clashes with British forces, in which civilians might accidentally get hurt, Irgun members were forbidden to carry personal weapons unless in operational roles.¹⁸⁵ The Irgun's distinctive moral thinking illustrates that it appreciated the gravity of the decision to employ violence to achieve its ends, and when there was a risk of innocent casualties its members did their best to avoid them. Katz points out

¹⁸¹ Interview with Lev-Ami

¹⁸² JIA K4-7.1.12

¹⁸³ Interview with Lev-Ami

¹⁸⁴ JIA K4-9.1.12, pp. 43-47

¹⁸⁵ Bethell, Nicholas. *The Palestine Triangle: The Struggle Between the British, the Jews and the Arabs 1935-1948* (London: Futura Publications Ltd, 1979), p. 161

that 'one of the basic rules of Irgun operations was to avoid bloodshed wherever possible. This was fundamental to the timing and tactic of every operation.'¹⁸⁶ Begin also explained the Irgun's view on killing civilians: 'We did not want to hurt one living soul. The ethics of the Irgun demanded every possible precaution to prevent civilian casualties.'¹⁸⁷ Accordingly, he ordered his men to make every effort to ensure that the number of casualties would be minimal, and instructed to issue advanced warnings. His guiding rationale was that the evacuation of the British administration following the warning would send the message that the Irgun's goal was not to kill British soldiers or civilians but to gain independence.¹⁸⁸

As shown above, the Irgun openly advocated violence but at the same time it also went to great lengths to preserve the public image of a virtuous and responsible organisation. Yet, it differentiated between British nationals and the general Arab population in Palestine; while against the former the main method was guerrilla warfare, the only method against the latter was terrorism. Evidently, the Irgun did make genuine efforts to avoid British civilian casualties; however it did not make any such efforts with regard to targeting Arab civilian casualties. The Irgun used terrorist tactics to inflict dozens of casualties among Palestinian Arabs; it threw bombs into their markets, coffee shops and restaurants, raided Arab villages and ambushed their public transportation.¹⁸⁹

Through its actions, the Irgun demonstrated that it was in effect a terrorist organisation and regardless of the victim's nationality or motives, by targeting civilians it had crossed the normative threshold between terrorism and other types of political violence. Although Irgun senior commanders who were interviewed for this research strongly rejected this inference and argued

¹⁸⁶ Katz, p. 93

¹⁸⁷ Bethell, p. 258

¹⁸⁸ Grosbard, Ofer. *Menachem Begin: A Portrait of a Leader* (Tel Aviv: Resling, 2006), p. 73 (Hebrew)

¹⁸⁹ Segev, Tom. *Palestine Under the British* (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1999), pp. 313-314 (Hebrew)

that the innocent casualties inflicted as a result of Irgun's operations were unintentional and regretful, they reluctantly admitted that it was hard to avoid the killing of civilians, whether British nationals or Arabs, when targeting train stations, immigration offices, restaurants and other non-military targets.

Ironically, the bombing of the King David Hotel in Jerusalem on 22 July 1946, that accounts for the Irgun's deadliest terrorist attack in which 91 people were killed and another 476 were injured, is also the best example for its reserved attitude towards violence. Originally the operation was intended against the mandatory headquarters that resided in the southwest section, while the remainder continued to function as a hotel. It would be difficult to argue that those who devised the attack realistically thought that there would be no casualties, yet historical evidence shows that the Irgun was concerned with the chance of innocents being at the wrong place and time. There are numerous accounts detailing the extensive efforts of the Irgun to warn the British and to save the lives of the people inside and outside the hotel.¹⁹⁰ The official British investigation of the attack concluded that warnings were indeed issued by the Irgun, but they were either given minutes before or after the explosions, leaving no time to evacuate the hotel.¹⁹¹ In any event, Irgun warnings went unnoticed and no action was taken based upon them. Ultimately, the explosion cost the lives of British, Jews and Arabs alike and following the high death toll and the heavy damage, many believed that the attack shattered the 'last hopes of attaining some measure of reconciliation between Britain and Palestinian Jews.'¹⁹²

The Irgun's post-explosion behaviour further supports its stated respect for the value of human life and reticent attitude towards the employment of violent tactics. Seeing the massive carnage caused by the attack, Begin expressed his sadness for the innocent lives taken by the bombing and stated

¹⁹⁰ Bell, pp. 169-173; Bethell, pp. 258-263

¹⁹¹ Bethell, p. 265

¹⁹² Oren, Michael. *Power, Faith, and Fantasy: America in the Middle East* (New York: W.W.Norton & Company, 2007), p. 490

that 'our satisfaction at the success of the great operation was bitterly marred. Again we went through days of pain and nights of sorrow for the blood that need not have been shed.'¹⁹³ Katz adds that 'the effects of the damaging blow we had dealt the British were overshadowed by the tragedy.'¹⁹⁴ In today's world, in which terrorist organisations take pride in their violence and refuse to denounce the killing of civilians, Begin's and Katz's confessions stand as illustrations of genuine grief. Another indication of the Irgun's hesitancy towards the use of violence is the fact that during the revolt it 'avoided attacks against installations required for the war against Nazi Germany, concentrating its attacks directly against British rule in the country.'¹⁹⁵ The selectiveness in choosing the targets was also a feature of Begin's limited approach towards the use of violence, that reflected the Irgun's reasoning and pragmatic adaptation to real-time events and circumstances. Nonetheless, it should be emphasised, that despite the Irgun's compunctions when inflicting casualties among British citizens, targeting the Arab citizens of Palestine was not treated with the same humane attitude.

PERCEPTION OF THE OPPONENT

Although the Irgun perceived the British mandatory administration as an existential yet temporary enemy, it lacked the revolutionary element that often characterises terrorist organisations. While it wished to prompt British withdrawal from Palestine and permitted the use of violence to achieve this objective, the Irgun did not seek to change the existing Jewish political order and accepted the leading role of the recognised bodies in the politics of Jewish Palestine.

Evidently, the Irgun's central objective was the establishment of an independent Jewish state, but equally important was to prevent deterioration

¹⁹³ Begin, p. 220

¹⁹⁴ Katz, p. 95

¹⁹⁵ Tavin, Eli and Alexander, Yonah (eds.) *Psychological Warfare and Propaganda* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources Inc., 1982), p. 11

into civil war in the process of achieving the end-goal. The risk of a full-scale war between the rival Jewish factions was always the greatest fear, and 'from beginning to the end, the Irgun exerted itself to avoid such a conflict.'¹⁹⁶ In an interview with the author, Yehiel Kadishai, Begin's Chief of Staff both as commander of the Irgun and later as Prime Minister of Israel, notes that the Irgun understood that hostility and enmity could threaten the national unity within the Jewish community and jeopardise the accomplishment of the common objective. Therefore, it went to the greatest lengths to maintain a unity and avoid internal strife.¹⁹⁷ Moreover, the Irgun refused to incite against or spread hatred towards the Jewish Agency or the Haganah; on the contrary, the Irgun treated its political opponents with respect. Lev-Ami rhetorically asks how he can hate the official Jewish institutions and Haganah members, whom he saw 'as Jews like us that because of misguided education held a twisted perception of Zionism and followed a different leadership.'¹⁹⁸

However, the Jewish Agency often did not share the same view as the Irgun, and questioned the authenticity of its lack of desire for political power and insistence on maintaining unity. Following the 1944 revolt declaration, David Ben-Gurion, head of the Jewish Agency, decided to utilize the escalation to isolate and destroy the Irgun as a political force, and thus announced a military campaign, known as the "Hunting Season", 'to liquidate the Irgun and its supporters.'¹⁹⁹ Leading commanders in the Haganah, amongst them Moshe Dayan (who later served as IDF supreme commander and Israel's distinguished Minister of Defence), rushed to Begin to convince him to forsake the revolt. Dayan told Begin that the Irgun attained an historical achievement by successfully proving that the British were vulnerable, but argued that it is now the time to stop its terrorist activity. Begin replied that since there was still no Jewish state at sight, nothing had changed and he rejected Dayan's offer.²⁰⁰ In

¹⁹⁶ Katz, p. 117

¹⁹⁷ Interview with Yehiel Kadishai, 6/11/2007, Tel Aviv, Israel

¹⁹⁸ Interview with Lev-Ami

¹⁹⁹ Kister, p. 119

²⁰⁰ Grosbard, p. 79

October 1944, days before authorising the persecution against Irgun operatives, the commander of the Haganah's national headquarters, Moshe Sneh, was sent by Ben-Gurion to a secret meeting with Begin in a last attempt to persuade him to stop the Irgun's revolt. In the minutes of their meeting, that were confidential until recently, Sneh reveals that Begin admitted that the Irgun had neither leadership aspirations to rule the Jewish community nor intention to change the existing political order.²⁰¹ Begin later confessed that after Jabotinsky's death the Irgun was 'prepared at any moment to accept the discipline of Ben-Gurion if he would take the lead in the struggle for national liberation.'²⁰² Nonetheless, Begin rejected Sneh's request claiming that 'our people is under foreign rule and there can be only one policy for an oppressed people: a struggle for liberation.'²⁰³

For a terrorist organisation to acknowledge its political opponent's leadership and authority and agree to being placed under his command is, by all means, an unusual standpoint. Therefore, Begin's acceptance of Ben-Gurion's supremacy and statement that the Irgun had no political aspirations whatsoever should not be disregarded when analysing the Irgun's political integration. Begin explained the logic of his decision:

We dissented in order to fight for our people, not in order to rule them...Good or bad, justified or mistaken, the fact is that throughout our underground struggle we did not think of power nor strive for it, and in our hearts we agreed that with the victory of the revolt and the liquidation of foreign rule, the government of our country should be taken over by the official leadership.²⁰⁴

Typically, in recognising the authority of the Jewish Agency, Begin was often accused by his sympathisers of handing Ben-Gurion a free-pass to power. However, Irgun leaders knew perfectly well that, as Katz comments, 'the

²⁰¹ JIA K4-9.1, 9/10/1944

²⁰² Begin, p. 149

²⁰³ Ibid, p. 140

²⁰⁴ Ibid, p. 134

alternative was a fraternal bloodbath which might destroy the hope of any Jewish state at all.'²⁰⁵

By October 1944, the Irgun's High Command stood before a critical crossroad – a resolution to violently oppose the Haganah's imminent operations could have resulted in an internal war, but a decision to hold back carried a risk that the Irgun would be rendered irrelevant and dissolved. Among the Irgun ranks there was a strong demand to retaliate, but Begin, loyal to his conviction that Jewish bloodshed must be prevented at all costs, ordered against responding to the "Hunting Season". He insisted on showing restraint and published an article in the Irgun's bulletin "Freedom", that stated: 'In this country there will be no war of Jew against Jew!...We did not insult rival institutions and persons. We did not disrespect achievements of others nor did we attack Jewish bodies.'²⁰⁶ Katz notes that Begin profoundly believed that 'the prospect of fighting in unity, with an accelerated march to freedom, demanded that the Irgun should now suffer and wait.'²⁰⁷ In his decision, Begin demonstrated that in order to protect the Jewish community from deteriorating into a civil war, to maintain unity and to prevent a violent power-struggle, he was willing to sacrifice not only the lives of Irgun members, but also its existence.

Although the Irgun was the second largest political movement with a strong armed wing, it had practical aspirations neither to oust the leaders of the governing Jewish institutions nor to control them. Apparently, the Irgun was aware of its place in the existing political order in the Jewish community and the division of power between the main parties. Furthermore, the Irgun's recognition that it simply 'did not have the power and public support to rule the Jewish community,' reflects its pragmatic view and willingness to reach a

²⁰⁵ Katz, p. 117

²⁰⁶ "Civil War – Never!", *Herut*, No. 39, 3/12/1944;
http://www.daat.ac.il/daat/ezechut/begin/44_10-2.htm (accessed 29/9/2007)

²⁰⁷ Katz, p. 87

political compromise that would enable it to become a legitimate actor in the Jewish political system.²⁰⁸

SPLIT IN THE RANKS

Shortly after the outbreak of WWII internal divisions arose regarding the Irgun's ideology, strategy, and extent of their success. In the ensuing debates Avraham Stern, a charismatic military commander who could not conform to the Irgun's compliance with the continuing British presence in Palestine, held a simplistic but convincing view that the entire British Empire was the foremost enemy of the Jewish people, whose future would be decided by the struggle for independence in Palestine.²⁰⁹ In the summer of 1940, Stern was able to persuade the majority of the Irgun senior cadre to split off and to establish the more militant *Lehi* (that was more commonly known as the Stern Gang).²¹⁰ Naturally, the formation of Lehi as a competing dissident organisation had significant implications on the Irgun's policy and behaviour.

The new radical Lehi strongly rejected the Irgun's truce with the British, that in its view effectively meant a cessation of the Jewish fight for independence, and it pursued an almost messianic passion that justified murder and other violent tactics. This passion was best articulated by Lehi's last commander (and future Israeli Prime Minister), Yitzhak Shamir: 'a man who goes forth to take the life of another whom he does not know must believe only one thing - that by his act he will change the course of history.'²¹¹ The extremist outlook and the conviction that Britain was the archenemy of the Jews, resulted in Lehi's split not only from the Irgun and the Revisionist movement but also from the mainstream Jewish community as a whole.²¹² Indeed, in a world dominated by *realpolitik*, Lehi's "sacred" objective even

²⁰⁸ Interview with Samuel Katz, Tel Aviv, Israel, 4/11/2007

²⁰⁹ Grosbard, p. 72

²¹⁰ Lehi is the Hebrew acronym for *Lohamey Herut Israel*, which stands for Fighters for the Freedom of Israel.

²¹¹ Brinkley, Joel. "The Stubborn Strength of Yitzhak Shamir", *New York Times* (21/8/1988)

²¹² Pail and Yorman, pp. 82-83

justified approaching Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy in an attempt to set up cooperation with the Axis States against Britain in return for recognition of a Jewish state.²¹³

Inspired by its radical ideology, Lehi did not feel bound by the Irgun's self-imposed moral and political restrictions to avoid unnecessary casualties when using violence. Since it primarily targeted highly placed British officials, Lehi members were once described as 'lacking even a spark of humanity and Jewish conscience.'²¹⁴ John Bowyer Bell, the American historian who specialized in the Irgun, further describes Lehi's terrorists as 'men without a state who fought across conventional territorial boundaries to transform by violence existing national structures.'²¹⁵ The radical image of its members and the unbounded strategy led to the belief that Lehi was 'the most violent and unrestrained terrorist organization of the modern era.'²¹⁶ Pinchas Ginosar, senior Lehi officer, admitted that it was invariably more extreme than the Irgun and adamantly refused to accept any political compromise with Britain.²¹⁷

The Lehi also publicly belittled the Irgun and 'nourished an understandable resentment at the scope of the Irgun operations,' that, by any standards, did not match its potential capabilities.²¹⁸ A senior Lehi commander added that 'the Irgun were only attacking buildings. And we were laughing at them...We thought it more effective to aim at the *lives* of the British.'²¹⁹ As would be expected, Lev-Ami, saw things differently; based on his account, Lehi hated the Irgun and felt contempt and jealousy towards it, and since 'they could not perform more sophisticated attacks, they were limited to murders.'²²⁰

²¹³ Lev-Ami, pp. 143-149

²¹⁴ A quote by Israel Rokah, Mayor of Tel Aviv from 1936 until 1952, in Brinkley, "The Stubborn Strength of Yitzhak Shamir".

²¹⁵ Bell, John Bowyer. "Assassination in International Politics", *International Studies Quarterly* (16:1, 1972), p. 60

²¹⁶ Ibid, p. 63

²¹⁷ Ginosar, Pinchas. Transcripts from a conference on "60 Years to the Irgun's Revolt against Great Britain", *Herzl Institute for Research and Studies of Zionism* (Tel Aviv and Haifa, 16/3/04), p. 87 (Hebrew); <http://herzl.haifa.ac.il/index.asp> (accessed 28/9/2007)

²¹⁸ Katz, p. 89

²¹⁹ Bethell, p. 160-161

²²⁰ Interview with Lev-Ami

Indeed, Lehi's favourite tactic of individual terrorism, which was used without any inhibitions, led to its notorious reputation in the history of violence as the 'epitome of terrorist vocation, a tiny group of men without restraint, driven by dreams and fantasies, rebels beyond compromise, demented gunmen in pursuit of the impossible.'²²¹

Lehi's fanatic image was reinforced after it unleashed a vindictive terrorist campaign following Stern's assassination by the mandatory police force in February 1942. In August 1944 the British High Commissioner of Palestine, Sir Harold MacMichael, narrowly escaped death when Lehi terrorists ambushed him in Jerusalem.²²² The next attempt came three months later, in what is known as the apex of Lehi's terrorism. On 6 November 1944, Lehi assassinated the British Minister-Resident in Cairo, Lord Walter Moyne. A senior Lehi commander explained that Moyne was chosen as a target because 'he symbolized the British Empire in Cairo,' and further noted that 'we weren't yet in a position to try to hit Churchill in London, so the logical second best was to hit Lord Moyne in Cairo.'²²³

In 2011, the British Security Service (commonly known as MI5) released confidential files suggesting the Lehi in fact plotted to target British politicians in the UK. It was revealed that in March 1946 Lehi terrorists were 'training their members for the purpose of proceeding to England to assassinate members of His Majesty's Government.'²²⁴ In particular, the MI5 believed that the list of targets of prominent British politicians included Winston Churchill, Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin and the new Prime Minister Clement Atlee.

²²¹ Bell, p. 63

²²² Segev, p. 370

²²³ Bethell, p. 181

²²⁴ Andrew, Christopher. *The Defence of the Realm: The Authorized History of MI5* (London: Penguin Books, 2009), p. 351

Therefore, Zionist terrorism became 'the most immediate, and urgent, threat facing British national security,' and was rated as top priority.²²⁵

Despite the apparent differences in ideology and strategy, the Jewish Agency made it clear that in their eyes Irgun and Lehi were the same. Consequently, the Irgun initiated a widespread propaganda campaign in an attempt to distinguish between the two and explain the fundamental differences.²²⁶ After the killing of Lord Moyne, the Irgun expressed its dismay with Lehi's use of terrorism and its belief that it was immoral and did more damage than good as it led the British to retaliate more aggressively. In order to uphold some sort of public order, Irgun decided to temporarily act against Lehi by tipping off British police regarding the whereabouts of its members.²²⁷ In response, Lehi murdered the Irgun's intelligence commander, in an act that symbolised the almost unbridgeable ideological and strategic gaps and represented the nadir of Irgun-Lehi relations.²²⁸

In light of Lehi's brutal terrorist campaign that threatened to tear the Jewish community apart, the Irgun decided to take responsibility and to repair the chaotic situation in Palestine. In accordance with its moderate view of violence and commitment to Jewish unity, the Irgun sought a resolution that could rehabilitate its relations with Lehi and bring together the dissident organisations under one political movement. Irgun was pressing for reunification with Lehi, not only to contain its independent operations and eliminate a rival that nonetheless stained the Irgun's public image, but also to overcome technical difficulties such as operational coordination.²²⁹ With the Irgun's declaration of revolt, an opportunity emerged in which the interests of the two terrorist organisations converged. Despite the fundamental differences,

²²⁵ Walton, Calder. "British Intelligence and the Mandate of Palestine: Threats to British National Security Immediately After the Second World War", *Intelligence and National Security* (23:4, August 2008), pp. 437

²²⁶ Interview with Lev-Ami

²²⁷ Bell, pp. 69-78

²²⁸ Ginosar, p. 83

²²⁹ In an interview, Lev-Ami described incidents in which Irgun and Lehi, unknowingly, operated in close proximity and almost got into fire fights with each other.

a merger seemed to be beneficial for both due to 'their heritage, their mutual enemy, their basic agreement on strategy, and their joint detractors within the legitimate institutions.'²³⁰ However, the initial meetings between representatives from both organisations were futile, as there were ideological and strategic divides that could not be bridged, despite the existence of a mutual end-goal.²³¹ Lehi members argued that the Irgun lacked the necessary courage to directly confront the British forces and therefore resorted to explosives instead of individual terrorism.²³² In response, Katz proudly admits in an interview with the author that the Irgun distinctly preferred 'to blow up buildings rather than killing people.'²³³ Lehi further claimed that the Irgun was willing to establish some sort of cooperation with the British authorities, and were not fully committed to their expulsion from Palestine.²³⁴

In late 1944, Irgun suggested forming a shared headquarters with Lehi, conditional upon Begin's authority as unified commander. Lehi rejected this offer as well, fearing that it would be subsumed into the larger and better-equipped organisation and as it did not want to risk the possibility of losing its independent status and capabilities. The most it agreed was coordination in attacking British targets and exchanging information about the enemy.²³⁵ Even so, Irgun still hoped to achieve a degree of unification for the benefit of the entire Jewish community. In July 1946 the Irgun undertook another attempt to bring Lehi under its auspices. Interestingly, this time an agreement was within reach, but before the union could be cemented, Lehi backed out. In a secret memorandum of the Irgun's High Command reporting on the negotiations, it was noted that Lehi accepted military attack as the only mode of operation instead of terrorism and assassinations. The deal-breaker, however, was Irgun's demand that the future unified resistance would recognise Jabotinsky as its "ideological father". The memo concluded that Lehi representatives

²³⁰ Bell, p. 126

²³¹ Ginosar, p. 86-87

²³² Lev-Ami, pp. 236-237

²³³ Interview with Katz

²³⁴ Ginosar, p. 86

²³⁵ Lev-Ami, p. 238

rejected this demand and both sides agreed that there was no point in continuing the discussions. Yet, there was a necessity to continue, driven by practical needs, with the military cooperation for accomplishing the shared objective.'²³⁶

In the aftermath of the failed negotiations, Lehi continued its indiscriminate attacks against British and Arab targets. These attacks alienated the Jewish community, and provoked general distaste with their tactics, thereby denying Lehi the solid popular support which it hoped for.²³⁷ Such extremism disturbed the Irgun and directly contributed to its restrained operations and to its adoption of a more moderate strategy in attempt to establish itself as the responsible and level-headed opposition to the official Jewish authorities.

LEVEL OF PUBLIC SUPPORT

Another factor crucial for the Irgun's political integration was the level of public support it enjoyed among Jews in Palestine and in the Diaspora, that was contingent not only upon the Irgun's actions but also on processes within the domestic environment in Palestine and international events. The recognised Jewish institutions led by David Ben-Gurion advocated a socialist ideology espousing the creation of a secular-democratic Jewish state, which appealed to the majority of the Jewish people in Palestine and abroad. However, the public support for the Irgun's Greater Israel philosophy and the militarist approach was marginal, and its political success peaked long before the terrorist days. In the 1931 elections for the 3rd Jewish Assembly in Palestine, the Revisionist party won 22% of the votes (16 out of 71 delegates).²³⁸ Despite the relative success in the polls, the nationalist agenda remained insignificant and the Irgun had to become accustomed to life as an opposition movement.

²³⁶ JIA K4-1.2, July 1946

²³⁷ Pail and Yorman, p. 99

²³⁸ Ibid, p. 16

In his vision, Jabotinsky hoped to establish the Irgun as the military branch of the Revisionist movement, and to introduce both as a viable alternative to the socialist Jewish leadership.²³⁹ As an experienced politician he knew all-too-well the importance of public support to the ongoing operational and political power of any organisation. Nevertheless, he was unsuccessful in his endeavours as long as the British Government was the foremost international ally of the incumbent Jewish leadership. At the outbreak of WWII, Jabotinsky saw an opportunity to realise two objectives; backing the war effort against Germany while mobilising public support for the Irgun by moving closer to the official Jewish political stance. In an attempt to appeal to Jews world-wide, he issued a statement that read: 'England decided to make their fight her own; and we Jews shall...never forget that for twenty years, until recently, England was our partner in Zion.'²⁴⁰ Jabotinsky's charisma and political wisdom to side with the Jewish Agency, prompted an historic joint statement calling for a general draft that led 20,000 Jews from all sides of the political spectrum to enlist into the British army.²⁴¹

Soon after the Irgun's image as a responsible and calculated organisation was beginning to infiltrate the hearts and minds of the Jewish people, Jabotinsky died in August 1940.²⁴² With his disappearance and without a designated successor, the Irgun lost its spirit, symbol and political compass and descended into chaos. Yitshaq Ben-Ami, a senior Irgun political officer, described the feelings and the impact of Jabotinsky's death on the organisation: 'Losing him was, for all of us, like losing our father...his death created a vacuum in our hearts that we knew could not be filled. He had died when we needed him more than ever, and we felt a kind of desperate abandonment.'²⁴³ Seeing the turmoil inside the Irgun and believing that in the face of the 'new challenges from within and without...Revisionism had reached a dead end,' the public that

²³⁹ In 1937, the Irgun became the de-facto military wing of the Revisionist party and represented the right-wing nationalist standpoint among the Jewish community in Palestine.

²⁴⁰ Ben-Ami, p. 237-238

²⁴¹ Pail and Yorman, pp. 107-110

²⁴² Kister, Joseph. *The Irgun Zvai Leumi* (Tel Aviv: Ministry of Defence, 2000), pp. 106-112

²⁴³ Ben-Ami, p. 244

was previously sympathetic withdrew its support.²⁴⁴ Clearly, following Jabotinsky's death the Irgun was in a state of ideological uncertainty and on the verge of collapse.

Furthermore, the war cut off the connections between Palestine and Europe, a fact that had critical implications for the Irgun's financial resources and international support. Since the Irgun was excluded from the political consensus it did not have access to national funds, and had to finance itself from contributions, membership fees and subsidies of the global Revisionist movement.²⁴⁵ With the Nazi "final solution" well underway, the Irgun had to rely on its dwindling financial reserves for survival. Yet, support for illegal immigration still continued on a small-scale and some limited funds did get through thanks to American Jews sympathetic to the Irgun's ideology and objectives, who enlisted to replace Europe as a base of support.

The "American Friends of a Jewish Palestine", originally established in June 1939 as a charitable organisation to raise funds for immigration operations and for propaganda purposes, began also to mobilise American political support for the Irgun.²⁴⁶ The organisation successfully recruited prominent American figures who openly supported Irgun's objectives, and provided it with arms and supplies.²⁴⁷ Katz, however, is more critical of the assistance given by American Jewry to the Irgun, claiming that their money was spent mostly on their own initiatives and projects, and was not given directly to the Irgun. According to his calculation, American Jews who supported the Irgun did not give more than \$100,000 in total.²⁴⁸ Additionally, for a brief period the Irgun also received support, arms and training from the Polish government

²⁴⁴ Heller, p. 254

²⁴⁵ Katz, pp. 14-16

²⁴⁶ Shortly after the beginning of WWII, the organisation submitted a letter to the British Ambassador in Washington, suggesting that Britain recognise the Irgun as a legal entity and supply arms to it, in return for which the Irgun would take part in defending Palestine against Nazi aggression. Yet, even on their worst military defeat at Dunkirk, the British rejected the offer stating that the Irgun was an illegal terrorist organisation (Ben-Ami, p. 238).

²⁴⁷ Bethell, p. 160

²⁴⁸ Interview with Katz

which encouraged immigration of Polish Jews to Palestine hoping to abolish anti-Semitism in Poland by clearing from it the Jewish presence.²⁴⁹

The decline in the public support for the Irgun could have been detrimental to its existence. The British insistence on implementing the "White Paper" restrictions in face of the Jewish plight in Europe, ironically, saved the Irgun from total oblivion. The decision to resume the attacks against the British indirectly elevated the Irgun's public stature. At that time, the Jewish community deeply desired that someone take a firm stand against the British policy, especially when it was obvious that the Jewish Agency did not want to risk its relations with the British Government by openly opposing the "White Paper". To back the military campaign, the Irgun decided to launch an intensive propaganda effort to mobilise additional public support for its military operations. Consequently, pamphlets and broadsheets were distributed and every morning Irgun members 'posted up on the walls and shop windows in the towns, communiqués on the previous night's operations, analyses of the political situation and exhortations for support.'²⁵⁰ Another important element in the battle for the hearts and minds was the operation of a secret radio station, "The Voice of Fighting Zion", which began regular broadcasts addressing the Jewish community and propagating the Irgun's ideology.

The Jewish Agency's decision to hunt down Irgun members, in the autumn of 1944, was not made purely out of fear that Irgun's operations would jeopardise the community's relations with Britain. Rather, Ben-Gurion could no longer discard the Irgun as a marginal organisation and felt it was imperative to diminish its mounting public support in order to eliminate the threat it posed on his own authority. Begin, despite being fully aware of the Irgun's rising popularity, decided against retaliation for the "Hunting Season". His decision was primarily led by the conviction that it will further enhance the Irgun's image as a restrained organisation whose top priority is the unity of the Jewish community. Although the Irgun was inactive for almost a year, its behaviour in

²⁴⁹ Heller, p. 267

²⁵⁰ Katz, p. 83

response to the "Hunting Season" resulted in all-time-high levels of sympathy for the persecuted opposition.²⁵¹ Hence, in the period between February 1944 and July 1946, the Irgun's public support within Palestine and abroad reached a zenith.

Following the King David bombing, the Irgun was accused of being too extreme, and as a result began a steep descent in its popular standing from which it would never completely recover. The attack brought almost at once a halt in the gradual increase of support for the Irgun's military operations. Denunciations were published by a majority of the Jewish parties, and the public perceived the Irgun as a group of cold-blooded murderers second only to Lehi. Despite the strategic success of the Irgun's armed struggle against the British and the deep belief of its members that their operations directly assisted the creation of a Jewish state, it failed to generate matching public support, since the 'majority of the Jewish community was vigorously opposed to terrorism.'²⁵² The Jewish press in Palestine joined the communal effort to delegitimise the Irgun, describing its members as 'criminal lunatics who were deeply despised by every member of the Jewish community.'²⁵³ The decline in the Irgun's public standing was also reflected in its thinning financial resources. As a result it had to find alternative methods to raise funds, and resorted to robberies, burglaries and extortion that 'have always been revolutionary means,' and mostly characterised gangs and thieves more than well-organised ideological movements.²⁵⁴

Indeed, the Irgun never enjoyed 'the support of the vast majority of the Jewish population in Palestine and was, for much of the period, fiercely opposed by the Haganah,' and by the end of 1946 it suffered dramatic political

²⁵¹ Bauer, Yehuda. *Diplomacy and Underground in Zionism 1939-1945* (2nd ed. Jerusalem: Ha'poalim Library Ltd., 1966), p. 280-282

²⁵² Bar-Zohar, Michael. *Ben-Gurion: A Biography* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1978), p. 122

²⁵³ Bethell, p. 157

²⁵⁴ Bell, p. 110

damage.²⁵⁵ Since it was never perceived as the formal representative of Palestinian Jews, it is not surprising that Irgun leaders looked for other channels to increase its public support. While the violent operations continued for almost another two years after the King David attack, the Irgun became more attentive to the community's demands and needs and looked for ways to elevate its public image. When the opportunity of a political accommodation became feasible, the Irgun was more prone to adopt a peaceful solution; one that would accomplish its ideological objective.

DOMESTIC FACTORS

This section focuses on the policies of the institutionalised opponents that challenged the Irgun from the 1944 revolt until it finally became a legal political party; on one hand the British Government in London and its mandatory administration in Palestine, and on another the Jewish Agency and the Haganah. Although the latter was not officially a state representative, it was recognised as the basis for a government in a future Jewish state and acted accordingly. The first part of this section will examine the British policy towards the Irgun and the impact on its strategy. The second part will review the complex relations between the Irgun and the Jewish Agency, and how they eventually led the Irgun to disintegrate and turn to legitimate political activity within the new democratic regime of Israel.

BRITISH POLICY TOWARDS THE IRGUN

The British policy towards the Irgun can be divided into two main periods: September 1939-November 1944, during which the Irgun was committed to its self-imposed truce with the British who in turn implemented a restrained military response against it, and November 1944-September 1947, during which the British army was given permission to act freely to suppress

²⁵⁵ Hoffman, Bruce. *The Failure of British Military Strategy within Palestine 1939-1947* (Jerusalem: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1983), p. 9

the Irgun's operational capabilities. Throughout both periods, the British Government and the Irgun diverged over issues ranging from Jewish immigration to Palestine, the acquisition of arms and military training and the political future of Palestine.²⁵⁶ The last issue, which naturally was the most important one for the Irgun, was addressed in 1937, when the British Government proposed to divide Palestine into two separate Jewish and Arab states, in what is known as the Peel Commission Partition Plan. Although both Jews and Arabs rejected the plan, each side for its own reasons, the idea of partition would become the most prominent solution for the Palestine question and the one that would ultimately terminate the British mandate.²⁵⁷ Yet in 1937 it still seemed an impractical idea, and therefore British policy focused on using the civil and security apparatuses as primary instruments for maintaining public and political order.

The 1917 "Balfour Declaration" stated the British Government's view in favour of 'the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people.'²⁵⁸ This was the first formal indication of the policy towards Palestine that expressed Britain's commitment to the Jewish people. It was later embodied in the League of Nations' decision establishing the Mandate stating that:

The Mandatory shall be responsible for putting into effect the [Balfour] declaration originally made on November 2nd 1917 by the Government of His Britannic Majesty...and whereas recognition has thereby given to the historical connection of the Jewish people with Palestine and to the ground for reconstituting their national home in that country.²⁵⁹

Despite the assigned responsibility and the written pledge, the British policy in Palestine until the outbreak of WWII was based on 'an analysis of British needs

²⁵⁶ Hoffman, *The Failure of British Military Strategy within Palestine 1939-1947*, p. 10

²⁵⁷ For further reading on the Peel Commission report, see Bethell, pp. 30-34

²⁵⁸ Full text of the "Balfour Declaration", can be found at:

http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/in_depth/middle_east/israel_and_the_palestinians/key_documents/1682961.stm (accessed 10/10/2007)

²⁵⁹ Decision of the Council of the League of Nations on the Palestine Mandate, 24 July 1922; <http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/mideast/palmanda.htm> (accessed 25/10/2007)

in the event of a European war, the relative strategic assets of Arabs and Zionists, and the impact of such a course elsewhere.'²⁶⁰ The rise of the Nazis to power in Germany eventually led to a British retreat from its initial commitment to the Jews. The British Government feared that its pro-Jewish attitude would upset the Arab majority in the Middle East, thus threatening Britain's vast commercial and strategic interests in the region and risking vital alliances.²⁶¹ The shift in the British policy was aimed at appeasing the Arabs 'because of their capacity to cause trouble near to Britain's communication route and oil resources.'²⁶² Formulating this policy in writing, the British Government published the aforementioned 1939 "White Paper", that effectively determined that an Arab state would be created in Palestine. Undoubtedly, the new British policy enraged the Jewish world and together with the suspension of Jewish immigration, it was the central impetus behind the Irgun's military strategy against the British administration in Palestine.²⁶³

Nevertheless, the outbreak of WWII defused the Jewish community's plan to politically and violently confront the "White Paper" restrictions. At that time, the Jewish leadership still believed that the British pro-Arab stand reflected a realist wartime-approach, and once the war was over the British Government, again, would support a Zionist solution in Palestine.²⁶⁴ Consequently, between September 1939 and 1944 the political situation in Palestine was fairly calm and a relatively high degree of cooperation between the mandatory administration and the Jewish institutions was in place. Since Britain wished to maintain the status quo in Palestine, its policy against the Irgun was restricted to occasional arms searches, small-scale arrests, and imposing fines on Jewish settlements.²⁶⁵

²⁶⁰ Bell, p. 51

²⁶¹ Bethell, pp. 39-40

²⁶² Jones, Martin. *Failure in Palestine* (London: Mansell Publishing Ltd., 1986), p. 8

²⁶³ Bethell, p. 41

²⁶⁴ Lev-Ami, p. 177

²⁶⁵ Hoffman, *The Failure of British Military Strategy within Palestine 1939-1947*, pp. 11-17

Following the German defeats on most battlefronts, the Jewish anti-British sentiments were revived, and the Jewish Agency decided to join the opposition to the "White Paper". In May 1943, Chaim Weizmann, President of the World Zionist Organization (and later the first President of Israel), announced that 'we do not and will not accept the White Paper...our choices are to establish Israel or to lose our way.'²⁶⁶ His intention was to contest the implementation of the "White Paper" through political channels and not through violent resistance. The leading Jewish institutions were, in fact, powerless to do much to repeal the "White Paper" or to convince the British Government to rescue European Jewry.²⁶⁷ The Irgun, however, took the community's struggle one step further and resumed its armed campaign against the British. In the early months of 1944, Irgun attacks against British installations were not met immediately with force, as the mandatory administration did not want to drive the majority of the Jewish public into the hands of the Irgun. Fearing that an aggressive response would provoke an all-out armed resistance, the British troops in Palestine were ordered to exercise restraint. The commander of the British forces in Palestine criticised this decision arguing that 'our forces were under extreme tension. They were veterans of battles in Europe in the last war. They were taught to kill and were now placed under irritating restrictions.'²⁶⁸

Additionally, in an attempt to peacefully resolve the conflict with the Irgun before the situation became uncontrollable, the option of a negotiated settlement was carefully explored. An archival report of the Irgun's High Command, that was only recently disclosed, reveals that on 2 August 1944, a senior commander suggested to reply positively to an initial contact made by the British and to open negotiations. However, a majority of the Irgun's High Command doubted the possibility of engagement with Britain, explaining that the timing was not right and that such a dialogue should be handled by a more

²⁶⁶ Lev-Ami, p. 183

²⁶⁷ Cohen, Eliot. *Supreme Command: Soldiers, Statesmen and Leadership in Wartime* (London: Simon & Schuster Ltd., 2003), p. 157

²⁶⁸ Bethell, p. 241

representative body, such as an underground government.²⁶⁹ Six days later, this issue was raised again during a meeting of the High Command. Begin said that a letter was received from a senior officer in which he reported that a source in the British Government wished to examine the likelihood of negotiations. The officer suggested that should negotiations commence the Irgun must demand to have control over immigration into Palestine in return for the full cessation of all violent attacks, without publicly declaring this intention. Yet again, the majority of the High Command questioned the reliability of the British source and their sincerity to explore negotiated settlement.²⁷⁰ In an interview with the author, Katz dismissed the viability of negotiations with the British on the grounds that the mandatory administration always preferred to deal with the Jewish Agency and labeled the Irgun as strictly a terrorist organisation. The Irgun, on the other hand, believed that a dialogue with the enemy could only result in tactical benefits not in a comprehensive political compromise.²⁷¹

The above evidence is probably the only indication of a serious debate within the Irgun about engaging with the British Government, and its failure can be explained primarily by bad timing. By August 1944 the Irgun had been inactive for almost five years and that, together with the split of Lehi, had eroded the manpower and morale. Moreover, there were hardly any weapons and explosives available and almost no financial resources. The remaining 600 members were 'a core of dedicated and competent men' with a strong desire to justify the Irgun's existence as the National Military Organisation.²⁷² They supported military attacks against the British not only as a means to achieve the Irgun's objectives but also as a way of building a reputation as a fighting opposition. Consequently, heavy pressure was put on the High Command to order a more intensive armed campaign, to which Begin responded positively. Ultimately, the Irgun's quick dismissal of the alternative of engagement and the refusal to further explore the credibility of the British offer also signify that the

²⁶⁹ JIA K4-9.1, 2/8/1944

²⁷⁰ JIA K4-9.1, 8/8/1944

²⁷¹ Interview with Katz

²⁷² Bell, pp. 108

it was both unready to deal directly with the enemy and immature in its understanding of the political ramifications of such a dialogue. In reality, the fact that negotiations did not materialise and the Irgun opposed any chance for a peaceful settlement meant that violence and counter-violence would be the defining strategy of the years to come.

The assassination of Lord Moyne in Cairo, in November 1944, and the terrorist attacks that followed, were the turning point in the British attitude towards the Irgun. If until then the British policy was aimed at containing the Irgun's violence and sustaining the fragile status quo, from November 1944 onwards military power was perceived as the only solution to the "Zionist terrorism".²⁷³ Although the attack on Lord Moyne was perpetrated by Lehi members, the British authorities considered the Irgun as potentially more dangerous and used the assassination as a justified reason to respond more vigorously to squash it. Two days after the assassination, the British Colonial Secretary, Oliver Stanley, claimed that the Irgun's terrorist attacks and the assassination of Lord Moyne, provided 'ample justification before the world for the most rigorous action,' that was displayed in the suspension of Jewish immigration. He also admitted the concern that a lenient response to the escalation in violence would damage Britain's international reputation and 'effect not merely upon Palestine but upon the Middle East and the whole world in general.'²⁷⁴

By early 1945, as the war in Europe was nearing an end, the British army was able to deploy more forces to Palestine and was unbound by the wartime considerations that previously limited its operations. Hence, the army wanted to implement a draconian policy that included extreme tactics ranging from attacking infrastructure that was supposedly used for terrorist attacks, collective punishment, and confiscation of arms. The Irgun was not indifferent to the escalation in the British military posture. Believing 'that the White Paper

²⁷³ Bergman, Ronen. "Espionage, surveillance, and eavesdropping against Jewish organisations", *Yedioth Ahronot*, 1/6/2007, p. 11

²⁷⁴ PRO WO 208/1706, 8/11/1944

could not be abolished without the use of force,' the Irgun accepted that it must enhance its violent attacks on British targets and 'launch war at the end of the war,' in response to the repressive policy.²⁷⁵

Soon it became clear that the British strategy, which succeeded in repressing popular uprisings in other British colonies, was inept against the Irgun's violent surge. General Bernard Montgomery, commander of the Imperial British Army who visited Palestine in 1946, invigorated his commanders to implement a get-tough policy and prepared them for the possibility that this 'would lead to war against the Jews: a war against a fanatical and cunning enemy who would use the weapons of kidnap, murder and sabotage.'²⁷⁶ At the same time, he blamed the government in London for failing to restrain the Jewish terrorists in Palestine. He suggested to Prime Minister Atlee that 'if we are not ready to enforce law and order in Palestine – we should better leave.'²⁷⁷ In early 1947, after a period of bloody clashes in Palestine, General Montgomery urged the Government to ease the restrictions imposed on the British Army. He complained that 'the whole country was in the grip of lawlessness, and the Army, who conceived it to be their duty to support the civil power, were not being allowed to do so,' and further insisted that the 'shooting should be left to the Army.'²⁷⁸

Although the British army regularly explained that its inability to put an end to the Irgun's violence lay within the restrictions imposed by its politicians, Bruce Hoffman, who studied the Jewish underground resistance movements, thinks differently. He asserts that the British strategy 'failed to recognise the inherent differences,' between other colonial uprisings and the Irgun's armed campaign, and 'adopted a strategy that was inappropriate to conditions in Palestine between 1945 and 1947.'²⁷⁹ David Cesarani shares Hoffman's view

²⁷⁵ Heller, p. 269

²⁷⁶ Cesarani, David. "The war on terror that failed: British counter-insurgency in Palestine 1945-1947 and the 'Farran Affair'", *Small Wars & Insurgency* (23:4-5), p. 654

²⁷⁷ Segev, p. 387

²⁷⁸ Cesarani, p. 656

²⁷⁹ Hoffman, *The Failure of British Military Strategy within Palestine 1939-1947*, pp. 17-20

and stresses that despite the deployment of British reinforcements in Palestine, military operations and martial law failed in preventing attacks on the security and civil authorities as well as curbing illegal Jewish immigration.²⁸⁰ For example, the Irgun was operating in urban surroundings, and therefore destruction of infrastructure was unacceptable as it could cause numerous casualties. Also, since Irgun members were assimilated within the Jewish community, making them effectively indistinguishable from the rest of the population, the army and police could not identify the terrorists and as a result arrests, arms searches and deportations were largely inefficient. Lastly, executing collective punishments such as curfews and fines proved counter-productive as they generated extensive support for the Irgun.²⁸¹

By late 1944 the British Government was convinced that Palestine was no longer a political-humanitarian problem, but had rather deteriorated into a military quagmire.²⁸² Consequently, the mandatory administration decided to add to its tough military strategy a direct and indirect pressure on the Jewish Agency to cooperate in the fight against Irgun's terrorism. The idea to mobilise the Jewish community was first introduced in a telegram from the British Colonial Secretary to the High Commissioner in Palestine in which he proposed that the suspension of immigration of Jews to Palestine was a sufficient 'incentive to the Agency to assist the Government in tracking down the terrorists in order to secure the removal of the ban.'²⁸³ The idea was further discussed in a telegram from the Minister-Resident's office in Cairo to the Foreign Office in London, in which it was claimed that the Jewish Agency will act according to what is best for its position and objective and that the Jewish leaders are 'afraid of extremists gaining control...[and] have every reason for wishing to be rid of extremists.' The telegram mentioned that in order for

²⁸⁰ Cesarani, p. 653

²⁸¹ Hoffman, p. 19

²⁸² Lev-Ami, p. 221

²⁸³ PRO WO 208/1706, 8/11/1944

collaboration to take place, the Jewish leadership 'must be forced into it by conviction that we have made up our minds to act firmly and resolutely.'²⁸⁴

The strategy of cooperation with the Jewish Agency, which resulted in the "Hunting Season", proved successful for the British mandatory administration. The number of attacks against British targets decreased dramatically and hundreds of Jewish terrorists and supporters were arrested as a result of intelligence provided by the Haganah. Particularly, by spring of 1945 the Irgun was forced to defend itself by going underground, suffered a significant drop in its ranks, and its financial resources were scarce. Yet, the cooperation between the British security forces and the Jewish Agency ended abruptly when WWII was officially over, largely because there was no apparent progress in the establishment of a Jewish state and the British Government remained indifferent to the Zionist cause.

Shortly after the "Hunting Season" was called off, the Irgun quickly regained its strength, filled its ranks with new and devoted recruits, and opened a more intensive violent campaign against the British forces in Palestine. The peak of the Irgun's more hard-line strategy was the King David attack, after which General Barker, the British army commander in Palestine, denounced the Jews:

The Jewish community of Palestine cannot be absolved from the long series of outrages...I am determined that they will suffer punishment and be made aware of the contempt and loathing with which we regard their conduct...[the troops] will be punishing the Jews in a way the race dislikes as much as any, by striking at their pockets.²⁸⁵

Following the horrific bombing, the British top priority was to tackle the Zionist terrorist organisations that contemplated all sorts of attacks including assassinations of senior politicians on British soil.²⁸⁶ For example, a declassified

²⁸⁴ PRO WO 208/1706 (no. 2448), 18/11/1944

²⁸⁵ Bethell, p. 267

²⁸⁶ Bergman, p. 11

MI5 extract from August 1946 states that 'several agents have reported that Jewish terrorists have had assassination of Mr. Bevin under consideration for some time, and that they have prepared a plan for carrying out the outrage, if necessary, in the United Kingdom.'²⁸⁷ Therefore, the British Government responded with unparalleled punitive measures ever to be used in Palestine, such as collective fines, longer imprisonment sentences, military curfews, and hangings.

The mandatory administration ordered massive military raids, amongst them was "Operation Shark", in which a four-day curfew was imposed on Tel Aviv, where it was believed the majority of terrorists resided. During the operation 20,000 British soldiers questioned 102,000 Jewish residents, and arrested 762 (among them was the commander of the Lehi, Itzhak Shamir). Hundreds of rifles, pistols and other weapons were confiscated, and the financial damage to property was enormous.²⁸⁸ Moreover, martial law was declared in the Jewish quarter of Jerusalem, severely disrupting every aspect of civilian life. Despite the operational success, the British strategy proved to be counter-productive as instead of convincing the public to cooperate against the Irgun, it mainly 'alienated the Jewish community because of the inconvenience and disruption to commerce and daily life that the operation caused.'²⁸⁹

Evidently, the forceful British military response had little effect on the Irgun's operational capability and the terrorist attacks continued almost unabated. On the contrary, the Irgun and Lehi stepped up the scope of their violence and targeted scores of British military and civilian installations in Palestine, killing 338 British subjects.²⁹⁰ Furthermore, the Irgun proved that the British fear of extending Zionist terrorism to areas outside Palestine was

²⁸⁷ PF 603376/V1 (no. 24a), 19/8/1946

²⁸⁸ Lev-Ami, p. 317-318

²⁸⁹ Hoffman, *The Failure of British Military Strategy within Palestine 1939-1947*, p. 24

²⁹⁰ Bethell, p. 358

correct, as it bombed the British Embassy in Rome and sabotaged transportation routes in occupied Germany.²⁹¹

By early 1947, the situation in Palestine worsened rapidly, and stability was even more difficult to restore. The British public and press began to question their government's ability to control Palestine, thus pressuring it to evacuate the territory. Newspaper headlines titled "govern or get out", "time to go" and "clear out of Palestine", were common until the last British troops finally left Palestine in May 1948.²⁹² Encouraged from the British public's response, Begin commented: 'at last the British people realised the folly of opposing the birth of a nation.'²⁹³

Ultimately the public demand was effective and the British Government recognised that the army and police could not enforce order and maintain political stability in Palestine. While the mandatory administration blamed its inability to stop terrorism on the lack of sufficient military personnel, the government in London accepted the fact that the Palestine question could be resolved only through political settlement and agreed that 'the only reasonable hope seemed the UN.'²⁹⁴ Additionally, Britain after WWII suffered a severe economic depression that reflected on the mandatory administration, which was effectively bankrupt and could not sustain a proper military activity to adequately counter Irgun's violence.²⁹⁵ By February 1947 it was clear that Britain could no longer control the mandate and the government desperately sought an appropriate way out of Palestine.

By May 1948 the British forces in Palestine were no longer the primary concern of the Irgun. Instead, its attention was diverted towards the Arab armies that threatened to invade the Jewish state immediately after the

²⁹¹ The Stern Gang launched letter-bomb campaigns in Britain in 1947 and 1948, sending to prominent politicians letters that were posted from Italy and contained small explosive devices. All the bombs were dismantled. Walton, p. 440

²⁹² Nedava, Joseph, *Who expelled the British from Palestine: facts and sources* (Tel Aviv: Foundation for Distribution of National Awareness, 1988), p. 24

²⁹³ Begin, p. 330

²⁹⁴ Bell, p. 239

²⁹⁵ Cohen, p. 160

completion of the British withdrawal. Katz admits that since Palestine was under UN discretion, the Irgun was 'concentrating on fighting against the Arabs...and so our concern with the British as far as the military action ceased to exist.²⁹⁶ On 15 May 1948, the day of the official termination of the British Mandate, the Colonial Office jointly with the Foreign Office, issued a summary of Britain's rule in Palestine. This candid report articulated the failure of the British policy to secure law and order and acknowledged the role of Jewish terrorism in driving the British out of Palestine:

His Majesty's Government had now striven for twenty-seven years without success to reconcile Jews and Arabs and to prepare the people of Palestine for self-government...84,000 troops, who received no co-operation from the Jewish community, had proved insufficient to maintain law and order in the face of a campaign of terrorism waged by highly organized Jewish forces equipped with all the weapons of the modern infantryman. Since the war 338 British subjects had been killed in Palestine, while the military forces there had cost the British taxpayer £100 million...in view of His Majesty's Government's decision not to enforce the partition of Palestine against the declared wishes of the majority of its inhabitants, the continued presence there of British forces and officials could no longer be justified.²⁹⁷

Indeed, the contribution of Irgun's operations to Britain's decision to evacuate Palestine in 1948 should not be undervalued. Despite the fact that in its peak years the Irgun did not consist of more than a few thousand operational activists its 'strategy was sufficiently ingenious so that it played a big part in getting the British to withdraw.'²⁹⁸

THE JEWISH AGENCY'S POLICY TOWARDS THE IRGUN

The policy exerted by the Jewish Agency against the Irgun, before and after the establishment of Israel, had the greatest contribution to its political

²⁹⁶ Interview with Katz

²⁹⁷ "Palestine: Termination of the Mandate", *London: His Majesty's Stationery Office*, 15/5/1948, p. 10

²⁹⁸ Fromkin, David. "The Strategy of Terrorism", *Foreign Affairs*, 53:4 (July 1975), p. 688

integration. If the British policy was based mostly on military means, it did not foresee any long-term political compromise and eventually led the Irgun to adopt a more violent approach. The Jewish Agency, however, had employed a multifaceted approach that ultimately brought a successful end to the Irgun's armed campaign. This approach included three elements: aggressive response to Irgun's terrorist activity, temporary cooperation in which for a brief period the Irgun was recognised as a legitimate resistance organisation, and finally using the establishment of a democratic regime both as a justification for disintegrating the Irgun and as an incentive for it to form a legitimate party in the new political system.

As noted earlier, the Irgun took a calculated risk in joining the Jewish community's ceasefire since it was not as well-equipped and financed as the official Jewish leadership. Consequently, the Irgun froze its operations and almost disappeared from the Jewish political scene. The 1944 declaration of revolt under Begin's command brought the Irgun back to life, but at the same time upset the Jewish Agency. Despite the Irgun's effort to provide reassurances that its armed campaign against the British was not intended to challenge his leadership, Ben-Gurion thought otherwise. The prevailing stand within the Jewish Agency, and specifically after the assassination of Lord Moyne, was that the revolt could lead to more repressive measures against Palestinian Jews that would ultimately jeopardise the positive progress achieved through the official negotiations with the British Government. Furthermore, the Jewish Agency was under growing pressure from the mandatory administration to assist in crushing the Irgun's revolt.²⁹⁹ The British Government made it clear that failure in restoring order and inactivity against the Irgun 'would soon be viewed as disloyalty, guilt by association.'³⁰⁰

²⁹⁹ The Jewish Agency's efforts were focused on the Irgun while the Lehi was spared. Initially the Lehi was ignored to prevent the creation of a unified Irgun-Lehi terrorist front. But later an agreement was reached between Lehi leaders and the Haganah in which it would stop its operations and in return it would not be targeted by the Haganah.

³⁰⁰ Bell, p. 124

Following the unsuccessful attempts to negotiate a peaceful settlement, the Jewish Agency 'had to consider more stringent measures against the Irgun, for the revolt seemed to be gaining momentum.'³⁰¹ The preferred method was to openly cooperate with the mandatory administration and to call for the Jewish community to unite against the Irgun. Days after Lord Moyne's assassination, Ben-Gurion published a statement:

The Jewish community is called to spew forth all the members of this harmful, destructive gang, to deny them any shelter or haven, not to give in to their threats, and to extend to the authorities all the necessary assistance to prevent terror acts and to wipe out [the terror] organization, for this is a matter of life and death.³⁰²

Ben-Gurion believed that there were two choices facing the Jewish community, 'terrorism or a Zionist political struggle...if we want a Zionist political struggle...we must rise and take action against terrorism and terrorist organisations. It is necessary to act, not just to talk.'³⁰³ In a meeting that took place in October 1944 between Begin and Eliyahu Golomb, the military commander of the Haganah, Golomb used a mixture of compliments and threats:

I do not deny that there is a spirit of self-sacrifice among you, but it must now be directed into another channel...you proved that when Jews start fighting in Eretz Israel they are prepared to go on to the end and even to die. But if this was your purpose, what you have done is quite enough. You have proved what you set out to prove. Now you must stop your activities.³⁰⁴

Golomb admitted that the Jewish Agency did not want to start a civil war, however it would be willing to do so if necessary. Golomb, who was sent on behalf of Ben-Gurion, threatened that although the Haganah was not looking

³⁰¹ Ibid, p. 121

³⁰² Bar-Zohar, p. 123

³⁰³ Ibid, p. 123

³⁰⁴ Begin, p. 142

to physically destroy the Irgun, events might develop in a way that would lead to the Irgun's annihilation.³⁰⁵

Ben-Gurion hoped that by putting constant pressure on Irgun members they would be forced to invest time in surviving rather than on planning operations against the British. He authorised the Haganah to use almost every available means at its disposal: kidnappings and extensive interrogations, sometimes accompanied with torture; expulsion from work places, schools and homes, and even worse handing over Irgun members to the mandatory police.³⁰⁶ In Weizman's letter to British Premier, Winston Churchill, from 18 December 1944, he commends the satisfactory cooperation and reports that 500 names of Irgun members had been passed to the police and that 250 were already arrested (during the "Hunting Season" a total of 1,000 names of Irgun members were given by the Haganah to the British police).³⁰⁷ Ben-Gurion also expected that the Jewish community would deny the Irgun the necessary public support which was most-needed in those times of despair.

Begin, Ben-Gurion's chief adversary, did not want to play into the hands of the British enemy who expected the Jewish community to be drawn into a civil war, which 'would assure him of peace and mastery.'³⁰⁸ Katz explains that although some members pressed for hitting back and despite the fact that the vast majority of the Irgun's High Command was captured by the British (and some were sent to exile in Africa), Begin ordered his remaining followers that 'there must be no civil war.'³⁰⁹ As Prime Minister, almost forty years later, Begin said that he hopes to be remembered not as commander of the Irgun or as a peace maker, but as the one who prevented civil war.³¹⁰ Begin's order, 'which ran counter to the very spirit of natural resistance,' and had rarely been adopted by any terrorist organisation, was fully honoured without any

³⁰⁵ JIA K4-9.1, 31/10/1944

³⁰⁶ Lapidot, pp. 49-51

³⁰⁷ WP 44/748, 18/12/1944

³⁰⁸ Begin, p. 177

³⁰⁹ Interview with Katz

³¹⁰ Grosbard, p. 88

breach.³¹¹ He intentionally preferred the non-retaliatory approach since he was certain that eventually the British would reveal their true intentions in regards to not fulfilling their promise of a Jewish homeland, and the Jewish Agency would then join the Irgun in its fight against the British enemy.

The "Hunting Season", despite its limited success, failed to smash the Irgun as a fighting force and Begin himself managed to evade capture.³¹² It did, however, result in an internal struggle that 'left open wounds and polarized opposing camps,' and the tensions that it created would later resurface 'to do harm at several decisive moments during the struggle for a Jewish state.'³¹³ Reality, however, was stronger than any personal or ideological rivalries, and out of the frustration and disappointment from the new British Labour government that came to power in July 1945, and had traditionally been in favour of the Zionist movement, the idea of a united Jewish front was born. Ben-Gurion, who realised that the Jews could no longer cooperate with the mandatory administration, called off the "Hunting Season" and in October 1945 invited the dissident organisations to join a United Resistance Movement to fight against the British. Begin admitted that one of the primary reasons for the Irgun's self-restricting nature in the use of violence 'had been the belief in the inevitability of a united front,' and thus was willing to show a degree of flexibility and to accept the Haganah's authority in the joint operations.³¹⁴ As ever, he was also aware that the Irgun's 'continued separate existence in wartime was unpopular,' and therefore he agreed to join forces with the Jewish Agency.³¹⁵ Furthermore, as someone who fought constantly for Jewish unity and aspired to be part of the political consensus and receive public recognition, Begin wrote in his memoirs that he regards the 'short period of the United Resistance Movement,' during which the Irgun was no longer an outcast, 'as the

³¹¹ Begin, p. 152

³¹² In August 2007 it was revealed that Begin was kidnapped by Haganah members during the "Hunting Season", but he was only warned and eventually released. Mann, Nir and Nakdimom, Shlomo. "How I kidnapped Begin?", *Yedioth Ahronot* (31/8/2007), pp. 88-92

³¹³ Bar-Zohar, p. 124

³¹⁴ Begin, p. 182

³¹⁵ Ibid, p. 276

happiest days of my life.³¹⁶ Nonetheless, he refused the Haganah's proposal to merge all the armed organisations, and explained that although the Irgun was willing to fight with the Haganah, it was not ready 'to dissolve under the cloak of 'unity'...[we] cannot give up our independence, certainly not in the first stage of joint action.'³¹⁷

It seems that Begin's insistence on maintaining the Irgun as an independent organisation paid off, as the joint struggle did not last long. The Irgun's bombing of the King David Hotel was the pretext for ending the United Resistance Movement. Although the operation was coordinated with and authorised by the Haganah (as agreed when the united movement was created), after the explosion, the Jewish Agency, not wanting to share any blame, firmly condemned the Irgun's militant ideology and use of terrorism. The Irgun was accused of treason and murder, and following British pressure Ben-Gurion declared that 'the Irgun is the enemy of the Jewish people.'³¹⁸ He later referred to the Irgun as the 'Fascist Devil' and to the Revisionists as 'members of a Nazi party.'³¹⁹ Despite the harsh words, the Irgun, once again operating separately, did not yield to pressure and further increased its attacks against the British that retaliated with hangings of Irgun members. When the Irgun responded with reciprocal hangings, the Jewish Agency issued an unprecedented statement that read: 'If there were such a thing as a Streicher [an infamous Nazi official known for his anti-Semitic views] Medal, the Irgun leaders would surely deserve it for services rendered to anti-Semitism.'³²⁰ This language, never used before in reference to a Jewish organisation fighting an oppressor, best sums up the discourse that prevailed within the Jewish community in Palestine and the perception the Irgun had in the eyes of the Jewish public opinion.

³¹⁶ Ibid, p. 210

³¹⁷ Ibid, p. 183-184

³¹⁸ Bell, p. 173

³¹⁹ Segev, p. 314 (Hebrew)

³²⁰ Bethell, p. 338

By the spring of 1947 the Jewish community was suffering not only from the military pressure of the mandatory administration but also from increasing Arab violence, and the public demanded the unification of forces against the two intertwined fronts. The outside intervention and the UN partition plan (adopted in November 1947), gave both the Irgun and the Jewish Agency the necessary excuse to stop fighting each other and concentrate their efforts against the Arabs militants that rejected the partition plan. Subsequently, with the exception of one attack (in April 1948) on a British train that was aimed at confiscating weapons, the Irgun stopped its attacks against British targets in Palestine.

However, attempts to begin negotiations between the Irgun and the Jewish Agency were foiled by Ben-Gurion, who in a press conference in late 1947 announced that 'there will be no dialogue with the dissidents...if they will dissolve their organisations and lay down their arms, they could volunteer to the defence of the community, just like any other Jew if they will be found fit.'³²¹ Ben-Gurion's contempt towards the Irgun was demonstrated in his speech during a Zionist congress that was held in Zurich in August 1947: 'the moral and political danger posed by the Irgun's terrorists' lies not only in their actions but in their very existence.'³²² In Katz's opinion, Ben-Gurion simply abhorred Jabotinsky and Begin and thus rejected any opportunity to even talk with the Irgun. Had he not hated the revisionists so much, Katz believes that 'we might have got much further.'³²³

When it was apparent that a Jewish state would be proclaimed as soon as the British forces would leave Palestine, Ben-Gurion's attention was entirely directed at uniting the fragmented Jewish community in which 'sectional interests were put above the interests of the community as a whole.'³²⁴ He devoted his time to outlining the democratic nature of the future Jewish state

³²¹ Lapidot, Yehuda. *The Irgun in the "Red" Haifa* (Tel Aviv: The Etzel Alliance, 2006), p. 236

³²² Ibid, p. 237

³²³ Interview with Katz

³²⁴ Ben-Gurion, David. *Israel: A Personal History* (Tel Aviv: Sabra Books, 1972), p. 70

and to bring about the dismantling of the Irgun. Abba Eban, the Jewish Agency's liaison officer to the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) and future Israeli Minister of Foreign Affairs, wrote in his memoirs that when he met Ben-Gurion to announce the partition plan, he found him 'rumbling with anger about the independent military actions' of the Irgun and the 'necessity to liquidate dissident organizations so as to affirm the national discipline.'³²⁵ By early 1948 Ben-Gurion assumed the position of head of the Provisional Government, and since the security of the new democratic state was the most urgent concern, he insisted that all official and dissident armed organisations had to be put under one central authority, since without it there would be no security at all.³²⁶ Accordingly, he notified the Irgun that there is only one way for it to become a legitimate part of the future state – to disband the organisation and to integrate into the Haganah.

Ben-Gurion was determined to announce the establishment of the State of Israel on the same day the British evacuated Palestine. However, since it was clear that the surrounding Arab states would invade immediately upon the declaration of independence of a Jewish state, some members of the Provisional Government wished to postpone the proclamation of the state to a time in which security could be better guaranteed.³²⁷ In light of Ben-Gurion's political problems in achieving the necessary majority to pass a vote on declaring independence, Begin quickly published a counter statement intended to pressure Ben-Gurion that read:

The Hebrew government will be established. There is no "maybe". It will. If the official leadership will establish the government – we will stand behind it in full force. But if the leadership will surrender to the threats or influenced by temptations – the force of the majority of the Hebrew youth will stand behind the free

³²⁵ Eban, Abba. *An Autobiography* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1977), p. 84

³²⁶ Ibid, pp. 67-69

³²⁷ Grosbard, p. 99

government, that will rise from the underground to lead the people to the war of freedom and victory.³²⁸

Ultimately, Ben-Gurion managed to get the necessary vote for the proclamation and on 14 May 1948, the establishment of Israel was announced and the declaration of Independence was signed. No one from the Irgun was invited either to the ceremony or to sign the declaration. Evidently, the Irgun was boycotted and its instrumental contribution to the British withdrawal from Palestine was ignored. Remembering Begin's explicit threat, Ben-Gurion treated the Irgun as rebels who threatened the cohesion of the state and used the apparatus of government to shun the Irgun. Ben-Gurion's perspective remained resolute even though Begin himself announced in a radio broadcast, on the same day, that the Irgun no longer perceived itself to be a separate fighting force in the new state and accepted the authority of the Israeli government:

The Irgun is leaving the underground inside the boundaries of the Hebrew independent state...Now, for the time being, we have Hebrew rule in part of our homeland. And as in this part there will be Hebrew law – and that it the only rightful law in this country – there is no need for a Hebrew Underground. In the State of Israel we shall be soldiers and builders. And we shall respect its Government, for it is our Government.³²⁹

To exercise Israel's democratic regime, the government opened negotiations on the incorporation of the Irgun and Lehi into the IDF, which was formally established on 26 May 1948. By then Lehi was left with only a small number of activists and weapons, hence it quickly announced that its arms would be handed over to the state and its members would join the national army.³³⁰ An interim agreement was also reached between the government and the Irgun stipulating that Irgun members would join the army in separate homogenous units and all operations inside Israel would cease. It was also agreed that Irgun's weapons would be decommissioned and that a senior Irgun

³²⁸ JIA KR 1948, "Herut" newspaper, Vol. 96, May 1948

³²⁹ Begin, p. 376

³³⁰ Ben-Gurion, 132

commander would take part in the new IDF's Chiefs of Staff. Another important clause stated that all independent purchases of arms by the Irgun were prohibited.³³¹ On 27 May 1948, the Irgun's High Command announced that now that a Hebrew army has been established, the Irgun's battalions are ready to join the IDF and to be of service to the state in its war against the enemies.³³² Despite the Irgun's clear message, several senior Haganah commanders opposed any cooperation with Irgun members under the auspices of a national defence army. Among them was David Shaltiel, IDF district leader who commanded several Irgun battalions. He explained that if he had the authority he would have put Irgun members in a concentration camp, yet he followed the order given to him by the IDF's headquarters.³³³

It is widely believed that Begin agreed to the terms arranging the Irgun's incorporation into the IDF, and opposed 'any effort to continue the Irgun as an expatriate organization.'³³⁴ However, Sasson Sofer argues that Begin, in effect, was not 'able to impose his instructions on the Irgun command and rank and file to enlist in the IDF and hand over their arms.'³³⁵ Apparently, some elements in the Irgun were not ready to give up independent armed capabilities, explaining that not all objectives have been achieved. The central objective that they referred to was the liberation of Jerusalem, that was under international trusteeship and was not officially proclaimed as part of Israel. Therefore Irgun members in Jerusalem maintained their separate arms and units and continued to fight outside the authority of the government.³³⁶

Although within the state borders Irgun members joined the IDF, Ben-Gurion used the Irgun's refusal to give up their arms in Jerusalem to stress that it was violating the agreement. Obviously, the Israeli Government could not acquiesce in such activity that was undermining its power. Ben-Gurion issued

³³¹ JIA K4 1.2 June 1948

³³² JIA KR 1948/390, 27/5/1948

³³³ Lapidot, Yehuda. *Upon Thy Walls* (Tel Aviv: Ministry of Defence, 1992), p. 199

³³⁴ Bell, p. 343

³³⁵ Sofer, Sasson. *Begin: an Anatomy of Leadership* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), p. 73

³³⁶ Interview with Lev-Ami

threats to use force against the Irgun and when the possibility of a reconciliation meeting between the two arch-rivals was suggested, Begin refused to meet with 'the informant who collaborated with the British.'³³⁷ Ben-Gurion, as well, refused to meet Begin and grant him the legitimacy and recognition he yearned for. He was constantly looking for an opportunity to dissolve the Irgun and such an opportunity presented itself when he received information that the Irgun was bringing a ship to Israel carrying weapons for its own units.

The story of the ship – *Altalena* – is most vital for understanding the Irgun's abandonment of violence and the degree of influence that a state-policy could have on a dissident organisation. It all began four months before the independence of Israel, when Irgun supporters in Paris planned to send arms to their comrades fighting in Jerusalem. Evidently, when Begin approved the agreement with the Israeli government on the incorporation of the Irgun into the army, he failed to mention *Altalena*. Due to technical problems, the ship set sail to Israel one month *after* the state was proclaimed. At that time, the UN brokered a ceasefire between Israel and the invading Arab armies, during which no arms or recruits could be delivered to any fronts. However, onboard the ship were 920 men and women and the cargo included millions of bullets, thousands of rifles and many tons of military equipment and explosives, that could, undoubtedly, help the young state in its war against seven better equipped Arab armies.³³⁸ Therefore, the Irgun decided to continue with the plan and to covertly unload the ship upon arrival at its destination.

It is now known that Begin notified the government about the arrival of the ship and offered a settlement in which the IDF would get the majority of the weapons, while 20% of them would be allotted to Irgun members in Jerusalem and to Irgun army units.³³⁹ But Ben-Gurion rejected the offer and demanded a full compliance with the agreement and handing over the ship and its cargo to

³³⁷ Grosbard, p. 102

³³⁸ Interview with Kadishai

³³⁹ JIA KR 1948/404, 23.6.1948

the IDF. Bell explains Ben-Gurion's refusal in years of suspicion and enmity that could not be lifted easily and his perception of Begin and the Irgun as untrustworthy.³⁴⁰

Understandably, in a democratic state that upholds the rule of law there was no room for a separate army in any shape, form and place. Eban explains that Ben-Gurion understood that the main issues were not the weapons and how they would be allocated, but rather sovereignty and authority; 'if a government does not have a monopoly of armed forces, it has no way of carrying out its international obligations or maintaining its internal authority.'³⁴¹ Ben-Gurion saw Altalena as an attempt to defy the democratic authority of the state, and he ordered the IDF to gather a substantial force on the beach where the Irgun was planning to unload the cargo.³⁴² When a government minister warned that this could escalate into battle, Ben-Gurion answered: 'A threat is meaningful only if it is backed up by a willingness to carry it out.'³⁴³ He warned the government that 'if the head of the Irgun will not be humiliated once and for all, he [Begin] will create two separate armies in Israel...therefore either you hand the government over to Begin or you tell him that if he will not stop these actions – we will shoot!'³⁴⁴ Subsequently, the government issued a statement that it:

...decided to take all necessary measures to prevent the Irgun from unloading those weapons. The Government regards this attempt by an independent group to bring in arms, particularly during the truce period, as a grave violation of Israel's law and of her international obligations.³⁴⁵

Clearly, by aggressively opposing the Irgun, Ben-Gurion saw an opportunity to consolidate both the authority of his government and the Israeli democratic regime. Indeed, he 'had no intention to stand idly by while the Irgun

³⁴⁰ Bell, p. 319

³⁴¹ Eban, p. 124

³⁴² Lev-Ami, p. 417

³⁴³ Ben-Gurion, p. 166

³⁴⁴ Grosbard, p. 105

³⁴⁵ Ben-Gurion, p. 167

became a military threat to the new state,' and Begin would have 'to recognize the legitimate authority or pay the consequences.'³⁴⁶

When the ship finally anchored on the shores of Kfar Vitkin, on 20 June 1948, it became clear that the primary threat was not the violation of the UN ceasefire but rather the danger of civil war. Shortly after Irgun members serving in the IDF began to unload the cargo, they were surrounded by six-hundred fellow soldiers. The military district commander delivered Begin with a ten-minute ultimatum to hand the weapons over to the army. Begin rejected the ultimatum as he thought that this is a complicated matter that could not be settled in such a short time and asked to meet with the officer.³⁴⁷ Begin refused to believe that IDF soldiers would open fire on their brothers and reassured his men that there was nothing to worry about since 'Jews do not shoot at Jews.'³⁴⁸ After quick consultation on the shore, it was decided that Begin would board the ship and sail to Tel Aviv; an Irgun stronghold where foreign officials and journalists resided. But before Begin boarded the ship the IDF was given an order to open fire on Irgun members resulting in 32 Jewish casualties.

The bloodshed on the beach shocked Begin, and threw him into an emotional turbulence. Overwhelmed by grief and disbelief, he quickly boarded the ship that set course to Tel Aviv escorted by two IDF naval destroyers. Upon reaching Tel Aviv, air force combat planes flew over the ship and a great crowd gathered on the beach to witness the event. Ben-Gurion used the arrival of the ship to Tel Aviv to further inflame the situation. He telephoned the IDF commander on scene and told him:

We are being faced with open revolt. Not only is Tel Aviv in danger of falling to the rebel forces, but the very future of the state is at stake...Your new assignment may be the toughest one

³⁴⁶ Bell, p. 322

³⁴⁷ Begin, p. 172

³⁴⁸ Temko, Ned. *To Win or to Die* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1987), p. 120

you've had so far. But I'm depending on you to do what is necessary for the sake of Israel.³⁴⁹

Onboard the ship, Begin spoke to the soldiers on the beach asking them not to open fire, informing the crowd that they brought weapons for everyone, and promising that the Irgun's intentions are to fight alongside the IDF not against it.³⁵⁰ Nonetheless, Begin misinterpreted Ben-Gurion's determination to crush the Irgun's operations. Loyal to his conviction that 'there would be but one center of civil and military authority in the state and that no dissident action would be tolerated,' Ben-Gurion ordered the IDF to bomb the ship.³⁵¹ In the heavy artillery barrage and the exchange of fire that followed, 16 Irgun members and two IDF soldiers were killed with another 70 injured. Moreover, hundreds of Irgun members were arrested, their headquarters were raided and a curfew was imposed on Tel Aviv. According to Ehud Sprinzak, the scene of the burning ship and the clashes between Irgun members and IDF soldiers 'would haunt Israeli collective consciousness for many years to come.'³⁵²

As the ship was about to sink, a ceasefire was negotiated and all the casualties were evacuated. Begin insisted on leaving the burning ship last. Yet, even at the face of civil war, Begin could not bring himself to order retaliation. Ever loyal to his conviction that national unity must be maintained, later that evening, moved to tears, he broadcasted:

Irgun soldiers will not be a party to fratricidal warfare, but neither will they accept the discipline of Ben-Gurion's army any longer. Within the state area we shall continue our political activities. Our fighting strength we shall conserve for the enemy outside.³⁵³

To Begin's annoyance, Ben-Gurion announced before the government that 'blessed be the gun which set the ship on fire – that gun will have its place

³⁴⁹ Bell, p. 324

³⁵⁰ Grosbard, 107

³⁵¹ Sprinzak, Ehud. *Brother Against Brother: Violence and Extremism in Israeli Politics from Altalena to the Rabin Assassination* (New York: The Free Press, 1999), p. 49

³⁵² Ibid, p. 17

³⁵³ Bell, p. 326

in Israel's war museum.'³⁵⁴ To this provocative language, the Irgun responded with its most radical pamphlet that reflects the loathing and contempt towards Ben-Gurion's government following the Altalena affair:

The Provisional Government and its leader committed yesterday the most horrific crimes against the nation. Under Ben-Gurion's order, a Hebrew arms ship was bombed with the intention to destroy the men onboard and its priceless cargo...wounded people could have been saved unless the behaviour of the "insane dictator". A government that is capable of doing such things...is not worthy to lead...it is now clear that Ben-Gurion's government is leading a rule of intimidation and mass murder.³⁵⁵

After Altalena the Irgun's disbandment was only a matter of time, and it seemed that Ben-Gurion's decisive and daring response had taken its toll on the Irgun's resilience. Two days after the incident, the Irgun stated that it would commence its activity as a political movement.³⁵⁶ Afterwards, Begin and other Irgun senior leaders 'made their peace with reality, lowered their sights, and turn[ed] their attention elsewhere.'³⁵⁷ They mainly channeled their activity through the Irgun's new political party, *Herut* that was officially formed after Israel's declaration of independence, although 'its reputation as a democratic party was damaged by the Altalena affair.'³⁵⁸

Nonetheless, the Irgun's operations in Jerusalem continued in what was its last separate stronghold, and Ben-Gurion still had his eye on completely dismantling the Irgun. The assassination in Jerusalem of Count Folke Bernadotte, the UN mediator in Palestine, by a Lehi splinter cell on 17 September 1948, served as the ideal validation to act against the remaining dissident Irgun factions. Eban notes that the murder of Bernadotte was 'once again an armed action with far-reaching political consequences [that] had been taken outside the scope of constituted authority,' to which Ben-Gurion reacted

³⁵⁴ Ibid.

³⁵⁵ JIA KR 1948/405, 23/6/1948

³⁵⁶ JIA K4-1.2, 24/6/1948

³⁵⁷ Bell, p. 342

³⁵⁸ Jones, p. 278

firmly.³⁵⁹ On 20 September 1948, Ben-Gurion ordered the IDF to issue the Irgun commander in Jerusalem with a 24-hour ultimatum to cease all operations and to decommission, or else all necessary measures will be employed to do so. The Irgun was facing two alternatives – to risk further bloodshed or to accept the ultimatum. A day later it announced that:

When taking into consideration the burden of responsibility for the fate of the Hebrew people and the sovereignty of the state, and in order to prevent further Jewish bloodshed, the painful decision is to accept the ultimatum. Irgun members will join the IDF.³⁶⁰

Later that evening in a press conference, the Irgun confirmed that it ceased to exist as a separate militant organisation and that it would fully integrate with the IDF. Furthermore, it publicly announced that it would continue operations exclusively through legitimate political activity, and that it will teach Ben-Gurion a lesson by acting as the only opposition to his deceitful and short-lived rule.³⁶¹ In this statement, the Irgun, that for almost two decades was the most powerful dissident Jewish organisation, officially lay down its arms and renounced the use of violence as a means to an end. The integration of the Irgun into the Israeli political system was now complete.

INTERNATIONAL FACTORS

To provide a comprehensive analysis of the Irgun's transition from violence to politics it is important to address the international system that was also instrumental in its decision to integrate into the Israeli political system. Although events and processes on the systemic level had no direct connection to the Irgun, they certainly encouraged the creation of an independent Jewish state and thus significantly influenced its thinking and course of action. The three most important events that are closely intertwined and will be discussed

³⁵⁹ Eban, p. 136

³⁶⁰ JIA K4 1.9, 21/9/1948

³⁶¹ Ibid, 21/9/1948

are the Holocaust, American support in establishing a Jewish state, and the appointment of UNSCOP and its decision to partition Palestine.

The ramifications of WWII on the Jewish people are well-known; the Holocaust, in which six million Jews were murdered by the Nazis, gave prominence to the need to provide shelter and security to the remnants of European Jewry that were confined to displaced-person's (DP) camps in Europe. In the final stages of WWII, the Jewish Agency's repeated requests to open the gates of Palestine for Jewish immigration went unheeded, and the British Government was perceived as aiding and abetting Germany to annihilate the Jewish population in Europe. Katz argues that Britain was not willing to lift a finger 'to stop the process of the killing in Nazi Europe, because they knew that at the end of it all there would be fewer Jews to worry about in Palestine.'³⁶² Nicholas Bethell agrees that inside the British Government in general and within the Foreign Office in particular, there was lack of sympathy for the Jewish and Zionist causes, which resulted in British officials averting 'their eyes from the most pressing humanitarian considerations imaginable.'³⁶³ Moreover, the Holocaust had great influence not only on the Jewish community in Palestine but also on UN representatives who visited the DP camps and found that the Jewish refugees 'were unalterably determined to emigrate' to Palestine, and this had some impact in convincing them that a just solution must be produced.³⁶⁴

The necessity to resolve the problem of Jewish refugees in Europe brought a powerful third party – the United States – into the Palestine issue. The US in the post-WWII era was strongly committed to Europe's security and heavily involved in the continental affairs. Consequently, Britain, as America's traditional ally, wished to share the burden of Palestine – politically if not materially – with the winning superpower. The British Government sought to secure some level of American participation in this seemingly intractable

³⁶² Bethell, p. 170

³⁶³ Ibid, p. 171

³⁶⁴ Bell, p. 239

conflict and to 'encourage a new sense of responsibility in the United States.'³⁶⁵ However, the US was also supportive of the Zionist cause not least because of the Jewish political strength in the American administration and politics. Although the foreign policy and defence establishments accepted the benefits deriving from siding with the Arab world, most politicians favoured the Zionist cause. Along the years, the Jewish community in the US had built 'a vast, overlapping complex of influence and enthusiasm, which they used to collect and dispatch funds and to maintain Jewish morale,' throughout the American political spectrum.³⁶⁶ Certainly, when the American Government was invited by the British to get involved in the Palestine question, the Jewish people gained a powerful ally that had considerable influence in generating the final outcome of an independent Jewish state.

Shortly after the scope of the Jewish disaster in Europe was revealed, on 24 July 1945, US President Harry Truman expressed American support for the Jewish cause in a letter to Churchill: 'I venture to express to you the hope that the British Government may find it possible without delay to take steps to lift the restrictions of the White Paper on Jewish immigration into Palestine.'³⁶⁷ Days later, following an American report that criticised the way Jewish refugees were treated in DP camps, Truman asked the new British Premier, Clement Atlee, to immediately allow 100,000 Jewish refugees to emigrate to Palestine. In his request, Truman emphasised that 'no other single matter is so important for those who have known the horrors of the concentration camps for over a decade as is the future of immigration possibilities to Palestine.'³⁶⁸ Once again, the Holocaust was used as a catalyst to resolve the Palestine question in favour of the Jewish people, and with the American president on their side Palestinian Jews believed that the creation of a Jewish state was closer than ever.

³⁶⁵ Ovendale, Ritchie. *Britain, the United States, and the End of the Palestine Mandate 1942-1948* (Suffolk: Boydell Press, 1989), p. 105

³⁶⁶ Bell, p. 244

³⁶⁷ Jones, pp. 43-44

³⁶⁸ Ibid, p. 44

Although the British Government could not allow itself to disregard the American request, it was clear that in order to protect Britain's political, economic and strategic interests in the Middle East, it was necessary to maintain Arab and Muslim goodwill towards Britain. On the other hand, since the British Government needed the American support and finance, 'Britain could not afford to appear pro-Arab, and she would have at least to pay lip service to American Zionist opinion.'³⁶⁹ The price Britain had to pay was the formation of the Anglo-American Committee of Inquiry to investigate the problem of Jewish refugees in DP camps, on 13 November 1945. The British suggestion of a joint committee was intended not only to involve the US in the matter but also to postpone the submission of the Mandate of Palestine to the UN.³⁷⁰ Incidentally, the Irgun submitted a memorandum to the American members of the committee, in which it wrote that all attempts to appeal to the British conscience, justice and sense of humanitarianism were in vain, and therefore it was 'determined, in our relations with them, to use no other words but "fight!"'.³⁷¹

The committee's report was published in 20 April 1946 and acknowledged that Palestine alone cannot provide a solution to all Jewish refugees in Europe. It recommended the admittance of 100,000 Jews into Palestine without linking this issue to the wholesale disarmament of illegal Jewish organisations, and the creation of a bi-national state under a UN umbrella.³⁷² It seemed that the report tried to please both the US and British interests; it accepted Truman's request to grant entry to a significant number of Jewish refugees, and supported the British demand to maintain its presence by creating a trusteeship composed of Jewish and Arab provinces.³⁷³ Nevertheless,

³⁶⁹ Morris, C.J. "The Labour government's policy and publicity over Palestine 1945-7", in Gorst, Anthony, Johnman, Lewis and Lucas, Scott (eds.) *Contemporary British History 1931-1961: Politics and the limits of policy* (London: Pinter Publishers Ltd., 1991), pp. 170-171

³⁷⁰ Jones, pp. 54-55

³⁷¹ Ben-Ami, p. 369

³⁷² Morris, p. 176

³⁷³ Bell, p. 162

everyone found reasons to reject the recommendations. The British Government quickly claimed that the report was:

Unenforceable and would spell the beginning of a long period of unrest in the whole Arab world...it could only be enforced if Britain received financial, political and military support from the United States, and if illegal Jewish organisations were disarmed.³⁷⁴

The Muslims wanted the whole of Palestine as an Arab state, and the US was sceptical about the political implications of the report. The Jewish Agency, although pleased with the approval of 100,000 Jewish immigrants, argued that the recommendations 'would not create the appropriate conditions for a Jewish national home.'³⁷⁵

The Irgun also discarded the committee's report, but it found a positive side to it as the report 'left no room for illusions about the mood of the British Government and its determination to carry out the policy of the White Paper to the end.'³⁷⁶ Ultimately, due to strong opposition, the Anglo-American Committee's report did not come into fruition and the British Government was forced to look for another alternative to resolve the Palestine problem. However, it did succeed in elevating the Palestine issue to the centre of the international agenda and to the attention of powerful actors such as the US and the UN.

After several other failed attempts to resolve the Palestine problem, British Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin, declared that the 'choice was now between an imposed solution and recourse to the United Nations.'³⁷⁷ As the situation in Palestine continued to deteriorate and the number of deployed British troops and financial investment mounted daily, an imposed solution seemed unrealistic and in February 1947 the government announced that it

³⁷⁴ Morris, p. 176

³⁷⁵ Bell, p. 163

³⁷⁶ Katz, p. 75

³⁷⁷ Bell, p. 187

would refer the Palestine question back to the UN.³⁷⁸ In its decision the British Government was hoping to rid itself from the heavy burdens needed to sustain the mandate, while retaining some privileges in Palestine specifically and in the region in general. Yet, the immediate implication of the decision was the loss of a strategically important British position in the Middle East as well as access to oil and other significant resources. A Foreign Office analysis concluded that surrendering Palestine to the UN would be interpreted by the Arab states as a sign of weakness and would generate a feeling 'that they could no longer rely on British interest and support, and our influence would rapidly decline.'³⁷⁹

Referring Palestine to the UN was the most influential international factor contributing to the creation of Israel. On 15 May 1947, the UN appointed a Special Committee to investigate the best possible solution. UNSCOP's report was published on 31 August 1947, and despite many differences and disagreements there was a unanimous support for the idea that the mandate must end.³⁸⁰ The majority proposed a tripartite partition creating Jewish and Arab states and an internationalised Jerusalem under UN trusteeship. Furthermore, 150,000 Jewish immigrants would be allowed to enter the new Jewish state. The minority suggested the creation of an independent federal state after a three-year transitional period under the authority of the UN.³⁸¹ Despite the disagreements, the most significant element that stemmed from the UN report was re-introducing the concept of partition, initially launched in 1937 and which was never officially taken off the table.

The Jewish Agency, which by then had lost all confidence in the British Government, saw the submission of Palestine back to the UN as a 'great opportunity for international conciliation under the auspices of the new world organisation.'³⁸² It also viewed partition as the 'only remedy that combined

³⁷⁸ Jones, pp. 229-230

³⁷⁹ FRO 371 52567

³⁸⁰ Jones, p. 277

³⁸¹ Ovendale, pp. 207-208

³⁸² Bell, p. 219

finality, equality and justice.'³⁸³ While partition had become the approved policy of the Jewish Agency, the Irgun saw it as an unreasonable concession. Accordingly, Begin declared in a radio broadcast that the Irgun 'shall fight these plans, even if the majority of the Jewish Agency sees them as the solution of the Palestine issue. We shall never acquiesce in the partitioning of our homeland.'³⁸⁴ The Arabs also did not want anything to do with the UN and rejected partition claiming that the 'UN had no right to give away what was Arab history and population.'³⁸⁵ However, they encouraged the British evacuation, believing that once the British army was gone, they could invade Palestine and 'would end the problem once and for all.'³⁸⁶

On the day before the partition plan was brought to the General Assembly's vote, Bevin submitted a detailed outline for British withdrawal from Palestine, pointing out 14 May 1948 as the last day of the British Mandate of Palestine.³⁸⁷ On 29 November 1947 the plan was adopted by 33 states against 13; after decades of fighting it was determined that two states would be established in Palestine – one Jewish and the other Arab (see map 2).

³⁸³ Bethell, p. 324

³⁸⁴ Ibid, p. 294-295

³⁸⁵ Bell, p. 220

³⁸⁶ Bethell, p. 296

³⁸⁷ Ibid, p. 238



Source: <http://www.americanthinker.com>

Map 2: UN partition plan for Palestine (1947)

When analysing the indirect systemic effect specifically on the Irgun's political integration, one must consider this against the organisational factors and the state policies that occurred simultaneously. In 1945, when the international involvement in Palestine gained prominence, the Irgun was very much committed to its armed struggle against the British with even more vigour. However, any advance on the international level that promoted the creation of an independent Jewish state and the withdrawal of the British forces, necessarily brought the Irgun closer to end its fighting. More importantly, after the Holocaust, an event of global magnitude that reinforced the Zionist cause, it was very difficult to rationalise the continuation of the British Mandate of Palestine and the prevention of Jewish immigration, and indirectly advanced the Irgun towards complete renunciation of violence. The Holocaust also accelerated the international community's desire to resolve the Palestine problem peacefully. As an outcome of the international work towards the establishment of a Jewish state, the Jewish Agency became more determined to prevent any internal interference that could jeopardise the

creation of a Jewish state. Thus, bringing the Irgun's revolt to an end also became a priority for the official Jewish institutions.

However, this could not be achieved without a powerful international ally that would support the Zionist cause and grant it worldwide recognition. Palestinian Jews found such an ally in the US administration that was supportive of the establishment of a Jewish state. The US was an important source of influence and assistance not only for the Jewish Agency, but also for the Irgun, which invested resources in building a solid stronghold among the American Jewry.

Throughout the years the Irgun established a network of American organisations that lobbied to undermine the legitimacy of the British Mandate of Palestine and supported the Jewish aspiration to return to their homeland. These organisations also rallied political support for the Irgun, raised funds, and eventually 'generated their own momentum, proposed their own programs and policies, and evolved into independent forces.'³⁸⁸ Moreover, Begin was perceived by the American administration as the leader of the most powerful opposition to the Jewish Agency, and assessed that there was a probability that in the future Begin would lead the new Jewish state.³⁸⁹ The strong relations that the Irgun had in the US, provided some degree of reassurance and security that the Zionist cause would eventually be realised.³⁹⁰ This in turn, allowed the Irgun to exercise flexibility in its dealings with the Jewish Agency, and since the realisation of the Jewish state was only a matter of time, compromise had become a viable alternative.

The international actor that positively sealed the matter of a Jewish state, and had the greatest influence on the Irgun's transition from violence to politics, was UNSCOP and its decision to partition Palestine. Before publishing its report, the Special Committee thoroughly discussed the issue of Palestine

³⁸⁸ Bell, p. 179

³⁸⁹ Grosbard, p. 45

³⁹⁰ Nedava, p. 68

and met with representatives from all sides involved. While political deliberations took place in Europe and in the Middle East, the Irgun continued its violent attacks against the British forces in Palestine. It simply refused to let politics distract its attention from its main objectives, and thus it rejected any plan that would deny the Jewish people their historic right in Palestine. Yet, though the Jewish Agency and the British did their best to de-legitimise the Irgun and its violent struggle, UNSCOP, surprisingly, invited the Irgun, in July 1947, to a meeting during which it was asked to submit its views on the situation in Palestine. At the meeting the Irgun's representatives handed UNSCOP members a memorandum titled "The Jewish State as the Complete Solution of the Jewish Problem". Furthermore, in August and again in October 1947, the Irgun sent USCOP telegrams with the organisation's strategy regarding the Palestine question.³⁹¹ Following the submission, the High Command's report concluded that the Irgun was officially recognised as a legitimate actor within the Jewish community in Palestine whose views must be taken into account.³⁹²

For the first time the Irgun was exposed to international political negotiations and asked to be involved as an active participant and to contribute its insight on a possible resolution in Palestine. Days before UNSCOP published its report, the High Command reported that the meeting with UN delegates was held in good spirits, and although there was little hope that the Irgun's demand of a Greater Israel would be accepted by the committee, the existence of the meeting in itself reinforced the status of the Irgun in the eyes of the international system.³⁹³ Clearly, the Irgun's international legitimacy had substantial impact on relinquishing the ideological objective of a Jewish state on both sides of the Jordan River, compromising the creation of a Hebrew sovereign entity whilst realising that there could be no apparent justification for the continuation of the violent struggle once an independent state was proclaimed.

³⁹¹ JIA G7-1.2, August and October 1947,

³⁹² JIA K4-1.2, July 1947

³⁹³ JIA K4-1.2, August 1947

CONCLUSIONS

The Irgun is in no way a typical case study of terrorist political integration, not least because its central objective, the establishment of a Jewish state, was successfully accomplished. Throughout its armed campaign against the British rule, the Irgun 'established a revolutionary model that thereafter was emulated and embraced by both anticolonial and postcolonial-era terrorist groups around the world.'³⁹⁴ Likewise, the transformational process that the Irgun underwent epitomised a successful terrorist political integration.

Although each examined factor had a different impact, the overall influence of the observed factors was overwhelmingly positive. While not all factors played in favour of adopting politics, it is nonetheless clear that as a terrorist organisation the Irgun's political integration offers a model, especially when compared to modern-day equivalents.

Examination of the organisational perspective initially reveals the Irgun's utilitarian understanding of violence as well as the moderate perception of and behaviour towards the Jewish Agency. These attributes point toward a fair degree of readiness to accept political compromise, under the condition that a Jewish state be established. In fact, it was sometimes the preferred alternative, especially when the level of public support for the Irgun was low or when the British military offensive was too formidable to handle alone.

Contrary to the observation of "the enemy" that prevails in current ideological philosophies of terrorist organisations, the Irgun did not want to kill all British personnel in Palestine nor did it question the existence of the United Kingdom. Although the mandatory administration was treated as an existential threat that must be removed, the Irgun imposed self-restraint and at times even a pinch of humanity in exercising its armed campaign against the British forces. Distinctively, the Irgun did not define operational success as killing as many people as possible or in attacking every accessible British target, but rather as

³⁹⁴ Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism*, p. 46

achieving a specific strategic objective; in its name violence was permissible. Unlike some other active terrorist organisations that perceive violence and killing as a religious duty or an operational goal, the Irgun as a principle employed violence only when necessary and with the intention to minimise the loss of life. In his memoirs, Begin admitted that the Irgun used physical violence to overthrow and replace the British rule, yet he rejected the use of the term "terrorist" attributed to the underground organisation: 'we were not a "terrorist" group – neither in the structure of our organisation, in our methods of warfare, nor in spirit.'³⁹⁵

Moreover, the Irgun openly recognised its place in the Jewish political order and denied any aspirations for control over people or territory. It also accepted Ben-Gurion's leadership and the Jewish Agency's political prominence. Indeed, the Irgun's political ambition was restricted to becoming a legitimate actor in the community; an actor that could freely espouse its different views, be heard by the public and consulted with in times of need. In that sense, Begin's devotion to the prevention of civil war demonstrated that he was ready to sacrifice his organisation in order to maintain communal cohesion. Rubi Rivlin, former Speaker of the Knesset (the Israeli parliament) and member of the *Likud* party (the successor of *Herut*), recently wrote that the Irgun never denied the legitimacy of an elected leader and never perceived its political rival as an enemy.³⁹⁶ Holding such moderate views towards the Jewish Agency and fervently committed to national unity and the prevention of civil war, made it easier for the Irgun to deal with an opponent that was respected.

The breakaway of the Lehi and the fact that it promoted a far more radical ideology and strategy than the Irgun, best illustrated in Lehi's exploration of a possible collaboration with the Nazis and plans for the assassination of high ranking British politicians in London, is another significant factor that contributed to the Irgun's political integration. Contrary to Lehi's messianic nature, that at times led to irresponsible use of violence, the

³⁹⁵ Begin, pp. 60-61

³⁹⁶ Rivlin, Rubi. "Against Betar Values", *Israel Today*, 6/11/2007, p. 2 (Hebrew)

Irgun truly believed that it served as the conscience of the Jewish people.³⁹⁷ This inevitably obliged the imposition of moral and operational limitations on its strategy and tactical uses of force.³⁹⁸ Moreover, since the international community and the majority of Jews in the Diaspora perceived Lehi and the Irgun as representing the same right-wing ideology, it was paramount for the Irgun to distinguish itself from the fanatical group of Lehi men. By taking a more moderate approach, one that was also more appealing to the community as a whole, the Irgun was in fact willing to consider political compromise, not least to prevent greater divisions among Palestinian Jews.

The level of public support that the Irgun enjoyed throughout its years of operation is equally important to its abandonment of terrorism. Despite the success and instrumental role in the collective Jewish fight against the British, the Irgun 'failed to spearhead a movement of civil uprising, did not broaden its political influence in the Yishuv [Jewish community in Palestine], and did not develop into a force able to decide the political or strategic course of the Zionist movement.'³⁹⁹ Indeed, once the Irgun realised that the general public attitude opposed violence and it had become practically an outcast in the Jewish community, the Irgun carefully sought an alternative to violence. The prospects of a Jewish nation and later the establishment of Israel gave the Irgun the justification to abandon terrorism and to adopt political means to achieve its ideological objectives. By integrating into Israel's political system, the Irgun hoped to maximise its public standing among Israelis and to gain more popular ground for its legitimate political party, which could eventually lead the nationalist ideology into the heart of the Israeli political consensus. This approach proved itself as wise long-term planning, when in 1977 the Irgun's political party, *Herut*, won Israeli parliamentary elections and Begin was appointed as Prime Minister. For the first time in Israel's short history, the government was headed by a right-wing leader and the 30-year rule of the Labour party came to an end. At least from a popular point of view, the Irgun's

³⁹⁷ Interview with Yehiel Kadishai

³⁹⁸ Interview with Lev-Ami

³⁹⁹ Sofer, p. 72

political philosophy won the hearts and minds of Israelis, and brought Begin to the tip of the democratic political hierarchy.

Based on the analysis of the British policy towards the Irgun, one can conclude that relying on a single military policy against a terrorist organisation could eventually result in a more uncompromising response and escalation in the level of violence. The British Government mistakenly treated the Irgun as a military problem, and not as political actor whose grievance needed to be addressed in order to secure the abandonment of its violent means. Seeing the Irgun solely through a security prism dismissed the nature of its ideological demand that was highly popular within the Jewish community. Although the Irgun's violent strategy did not receive the same public support as its ideology, the fact that the Irgun was constantly hunted down by the British, often at the cost of interrupting the daily lives of the Jewish community, resulted in mounting opposition towards the mandatory authorities. Additionally, the British reluctance to offer a viable political compromise to the Irgun and blocking all channels of communication, led the Irgun to implement a more hard-line and unyielding approach that the British Government could not deal with for extended period of time. Despite the superiority both in troops and arms, the British military policy failed to destroy the Irgun, leading the British government to relinquish Palestine to the UN and to withdraw its forces. Had the British, or the Irgun for that matter, seriously explored the possibility of compromise and dialogue, perhaps the Irgun's political integration, would have occurred sooner and many lives would have been spared.

The official Jewish institutions headed by Ben-Gurion adopted a mixture of violence and compromise, confrontation and accommodation, in their dealing with the Irgun. This policy was fairly successful since it entailed two vital advantages that the British lacked in handling the Irgun – the first was the support and legitimacy of the Jewish community as a whole, and the second was the establishment of a democratic regime in which the Irgun could take part. Throughout most of the years of the mandate, Jewish public opinion tended to side with the mainstream leadership. Although occasionally

sympathy was offered to the Irgun, the de-legitimisation campaign that was run separately by the British and the Jewish Agency was successful, and the Jewish community viewed the Irgun as a terrorist organisation that could jeopardise the Zionist cause. Even after Israel was established, the public opinion supported Ben-Gurion's actions against the Irgun and his handling of the Altalena affair, despite the heavy loss of Jewish lives.

The formation of a democratic state and pluralistic society enabled Ben-Gurion to offer an incentive for integration and an opportunity for the Irgun to channel its ideology to political activity. When Begin finally came to terms with the dissolution of the Irgun he 'was intent on demonstrating that he was now closing his underground years and moving towards legal party life in the new democracy of Israel.'⁴⁰⁰ Begin attempted to establish a constructive dialogue between *Herut* and the other coalition parties, but his party's platform was perceived as radical and he would 'learn by trial and error that governmental responsibility involved the abandonment of radical ideology and the adoption of a different kind of politics.'⁴⁰¹ Indeed, for almost thirty years in the opposition, Begin and *Herut* were kept at a distance from any governmental responsibility. Among others, one example of how far Ben-Gurion was willing to go to outcast the Irgun was that as Prime Minister he ostracised Begin by refusing to call him by his name, but rather as the "Member of the Knesset sitting to the right of Yochanan Bader". This cynical example, points out above all how the Irgun and *Herut* were treated in the mainstream public opinion. If the ideological philosophy of the Irgun wished to endure, it seems that the single viable alternative was to adhere to the norms and rules of the Israeli political system and to win power through democratic elections.

Lastly, the dynamics and events on the international level had substantial, albeit indirect, effect on the Irgun's political integration. By advancing the establishment of a Jewish state, systemic factors altered the Irgun's view on violence and its approach towards politics. Particularly, the UN

⁴⁰⁰ Jones, p. 277

⁴⁰¹ Ibid, p. 281

partition plan that gave the Jewish community a good reason for optimism, and was seen as part of a comprehensive international effort to resolve the instability in Palestine, 'undermined the significance of the Irgun's independent activity,' and brought it on brink of political accommodation.⁴⁰² Clearly, the Irgun had to adapt itself to the changing international political circumstances; its lack of enthusiasm to do so was the prime reason for Ben-Gurion's decision to exert forceful measures against the Irgun.

Nonetheless, the Irgun's exposure to world-politics and international calculations had a considerable positive effect on its strategy. Taking part in the political discussions evolving around the Palestine question had a significant effect on the Irgun. Ultimately, the decision to establish a Jewish state undermined the Irgun's violent campaign and facilitated the formation of its legitimate political party. This shift in strategy was not an easy one to perform and was an immense burden on Begin's mental state. Ofer Grosbard, a psychologist by profession, argues that the shift from violence to political compromise was extremely difficult for Begin, not only because he had to make peace with the fact that his dream of Greater Israel has not been accomplished, but also since he realised that it meant the disbandment of the Irgun. Moreover, Begin acknowledged that he was bound to become a citizen in a state headed by his all-time nemesis, David Ben-Gurion.⁴⁰³ Despite the fact that the Irgun ideologically objected to the UN partition plan, because it excluded Jerusalem and left the state too small to absorb future Jewish immigrants, it was ready to move on and protect whatever the international system was willing to give the Jews.⁴⁰⁴

At long last, in September 1948 the Irgun accepted the government's monopoly on the legitimate use of physical force, ceased its separate military operations and was fully incorporated into the state's national army. In doing so, the Irgun achieved the first of the two highest levels of political integration.

⁴⁰² Sofer, p. 73

⁴⁰³ Grosbard, p. 98

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid, p. 99-100

In 1977, twenty-nine years later, when Begin was elected as Prime Minister of Israel and *Herut*, the political successor of the Irgun, was leading the government, it achieved the second highest level of political integration.

CHAPTER 3: THE ULSTER VOLUNTEER FORCE



The Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) was the deadliest Protestant terrorist organisation active throughout the Northern Ireland conflict. Jim Cusack and Henry McDonald describe the UVF as a terrorist organisation that was responsible 'for a series of heinous crimes against ordinary people, which have left thousands of families devastated.'⁴⁰⁵ Its principal purpose was for Northern Ireland to remain an integral part of the United Kingdom. In the name of this objective, UVF members killed over 500 people during the period between 1969 and 1998, also known as the Troubles, and after the signing of the 1998 Good Friday Agreement.⁴⁰⁶

A thorough analysis of the UVF's transition from violence to politics cannot be complete without reference to the closely linked left-wing political party, the Progressive Unionist Party (PUP), which was established in 1977 and promoted the UVF's political ideas. Leaders of the PUP were former terrorists with considerable standing in the UVF and supporters came from working-class families in Northern Ireland. Since its inception, the party overtly expressed the UVF's political ideology in an attempt to 'solidify the base of support for the paramilitary action.'⁴⁰⁷ Contrary to its militant agenda in the past, nowadays the PUP is 'committed to maintaining and strengthening the present constitutional position of Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom,' through 'accountable democracy,' and a 'power-sharing in a devolved government.'⁴⁰⁸

⁴⁰⁵ Cusack, Jim and McDonald, Henry. *UVF: The End Game* (Dublin: Poolbeg Press Ltd., 2008), p. 1

⁴⁰⁶ Sutton, Malcolm. *Bear in Mind These Dead: An Index of Deaths from the Conflict in Ireland 1969-1993* (Belfast: Beyond the Pale Publications, 1994); <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/sutton/book/index.html>

⁴⁰⁷ Bruce, Steve. "Northern Ireland: Reappraising Loyalist Violence", in O'Day Alan (ed.) *Terrorism's Laboratory: The Case of Northern Ireland* (Hants: Dartmouth Publishing Company Ltd., 1995), p. 124

⁴⁰⁸ Progressive Unionist Party Assembly Election Policy 2007, p. 3; <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/issues/politics/docs/pup/pup010307man.pdf> (accessed: 12/9/2011)

Despite the UVF's support of the 1998 Good Friday Agreement, which the PUP was a party to, in its aftermath both organisations failed to find their way in a peaceful society; the UVF did not complete its political integration, continued to use violence and was engaged in internal armed clashes with rival Protestant groups as well as in criminal and drug-related activity, and the PUP was in a state of decline with no clear future in sight.⁴⁰⁹ Unable to rise above communal affairs and ethnic separatism and appeal to the wider Protestant constituency, the UVF failed to sustain its base of popular support. Moreover, the UVF's violence severely damaged the PUP's political success. Since Protestants tend to avoid openly expressing their support for those aligned to paramilitary organisations, the vote that the PUP received in the 2011 elections was negligible and subsequently the party lost its only seat.⁴¹⁰

The PUP's electoral fiasco signified, above all, the UVF's inability to become a credible political force and to attain a positive and constructive role in Northern Ireland in a post-conflict era. The UVF realised that its position and impact on the political situation in Northern Ireland was insignificant. The fear that it might sink into obscurity led the UVF to formally announce in May 2007 that it would lay down its arms and 'assume a non-military, civilianised role.'⁴¹¹ After forty years of violence, the UVF completed its transformation from a military to a civilian organisation, and vowed to achieve its strategic objectives exclusively through democratic and peaceful means.

Clearly, the UVF played a central part in the Northern Ireland conflict but it has generally been overshadowed by the attention given to the Provisional Irish Republican Army – commonly referred to as the IRA (or

⁴⁰⁹ Steenkamp, Christina. "Loyalist Paramilitary Violence after the Belfast Agreement", *Ethnopolitics*, 7:1 (March 2008), pp. 159-176

⁴¹⁰ Paramilitary organisation in the context of the Northern Ireland conflict refers to 'sub-state groups that use violence for political ends, which – in other contexts – would simply be referred to as terrorists.' Neumann, Peter. "The Imperfect Peace: Paramilitary Violence in Northern Ireland", *Low Intensity Conflict & Law Enforcement*, 11:1 (Spring 2002), p. 117

⁴¹¹ http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/northern_ireland/6618371.stm (accessed 23/12/2007)

Provos).⁴¹² The 'dearth of literature related to all the loyalist terrorist movements' involved in the conflict 'may be somewhat deliberate,' but it does not change the reality that the story of the UVF is heavily under-researched.⁴¹³ Particularly, the countless studies of the Troubles 'have insufficiently explained the rationale underpinning the UVF's use of the military instrument or why it finally decided to call a halt to its terrorist campaign in May 2007.'⁴¹⁴

There is considerable value in analysing the UVF's transition from violence to politics. Its uniqueness lies in the fact that unlike most terrorist organisations that fought against a state or an existing political order, the UVF not only supported a sovereign state but also wished to remain linked to it. To this end, the UVF is characterised by Steve Bruce, a leading expert on loyalist ideology and violence, as a *pro-state* organisation; a status that entails a range of factors and dynamics that are fundamentally different from other terrorists' participation in legitimate politics.⁴¹⁵

"FOR GOD AND ULSTER"

The history of the Northern Ireland conflict has been comprehensively researched and discussed. Nonetheless, for the purpose of situating the reader, it is important to set out the context which led to the creation of the UVF.

In essence, the Northern Ireland conflict is a clash between sovereignty and identity. The territory known today as Northern Ireland has a long history of bloody rebellions dating back to the beginning of the British rule in the 12th century. In the 16th and 17th centuries British monarchs began settling Scottish and English subjects, who were mostly Protestants, in the Northern part of the

⁴¹² The original Irish Republican Army was active from the early 1920s until 1969, when it split into two rival parties: the more moderate Official IRA and the militant Provisional IRA. The PIRA quickly became the dominant republican faction in Northern Ireland.

⁴¹³ Cusack and McDonald, p. 1

⁴¹⁴ Edwards, Aaron. "Abandoning Armed Resistance? The Ulster Volunteer Force as a Case Study of Strategic Terrorism in Northern Ireland", *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 32:2 (February 2009), p. 147

⁴¹⁵ Bruce, Steve. "The problems of 'pro-state' terrorism: Loyalist paramilitaries in Northern Ireland", *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 4:1 (Spring 1992), pp. 67-88

Irish island, which was predominantly occupied by Catholics (a colonising process known as the "plantation of Ulster"⁴¹⁶). The fact that the new settlers were racially and religiously different than the native Irish people influenced the 'relations between the two groups,' which 'were generally distant and periodically degenerated into open warfare.'⁴¹⁷ In 1800 the British parliament passed the Act of Union that abolished the Irish assembly and put the entire island under direct British rule governed from London. The Act had social, economic and constitutional consequences that ultimately inflamed an Irish-Catholic nationalist sentiment that opposed such legislation and exerted political pressure on successive British governments.

By the end of the 19th century, the Catholics' demand for Home Rule advocating the restoration of Ireland as an independent and a sovereign entity grew stronger. Fearing to be put under the control of a Catholic-dominated Ireland, the Protestant minority threatened to rebel against the move. The ensuing debate produced the two main rival communities in Northern Ireland with separate national identities: the *Unionists* (mostly Protestants) that viewed Northern Ireland as a legitimate part of the United Kingdom and the *Nationalists* (mostly Catholics) that wished to have greater autonomy and eventually to establish an independent Irish Republic. Respectively, the two communities developed more radical expressions of militancy that advocated the use of violence for political purposes; *Loyalism* and *Republicanism*.

The British government's response to the Catholic demands was to introduce several Home Rule proposals in the Westminster Parliament. Although the first two bills suffered parliamentary defeats, the third passed in 1912 and it seemed that Ireland would become a self-governing autonomy ruled by the majority Catholic population. Out of fear that the 'British Government was bent on selling them out to a united Ireland,' the Protestant

⁴¹⁶ Ulster is one of the four geographical provinces of Ireland. Of its nine counties, three are part of the Republic of Ireland, while the remaining six constitutes Northern Ireland.

⁴¹⁷ Bruce, Steve. *The Red Hand: Protestant Paramilitaries in Northern Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), p. 7

majority in Ulster, who ferociously opposed self-rule from Dublin, formed the Ulster Volunteer Force – the original incarnation of the present terrorist organisation.⁴¹⁸ Under the leadership of Sir Edward Carson, the UVF – the first loyalist paramilitary organisation – brought together several groups of volunteers into a well structured, trained and armed force. The prospects of Home Rule rallied the Protestants to sign a Covenant pledging to use 'all means which may be found necessary to defeat the present conspiracy to set up a Home Rule Parliament in Ireland.'⁴¹⁹ The implicit threat to use violence dominated the unionist psyche for generations to come. It also best reflected the predicament of Northern Ireland's Protestants – their 'loyalty to the crown was tempered by an occasional, sometimes violent, disloyalty to its government.'⁴²⁰

The disciplined UVF was the main unionist apparatus in the threat to use military resistance, should the plans for Home Rule materialise. Yet, the Home Rule Act never came into effect and a civil war was averted, due to the outbreak of World War I in July 1914. Three days after hostilities began the British War Secretary, Lord Kitchener, recognising the patriotism of Ulstermen, expressed his desire that UVF men would enlist into the British army. Ten thousand UVF members accepted his call and joined the 36th Ulster Division. Their enthusiasm to fight alongside the British army despite the looming constitutional crisis at home is explained by Peter Taylor, a British journalist who wrote extensively on the Northern Ireland conflict: 'they were volunteers...they were not regular soldiers. They had joined out of love of their country and they really believed they had a higher duty to perform.'⁴²¹ On 1 July 1916, the Ulster Division was sent to battle the Germans in Somme, France.⁴²² Although they fought

⁴¹⁸ Taylor, Peter. *Loyalists* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 1999), p. 22

⁴¹⁹ Lydon, James. *The Making of Ireland: From Ancient Times to the Present* (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 328

⁴²⁰ McDonald, Henry. *Trimble* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing Plc, 2000), p. 9

⁴²¹ Cited in Taylor, p. 24

⁴²² In April 1916, three months before the Battle of the Somme, IRA members seized the post office in Dublin and proclaimed the Irish Republic, in what is commonly known as the Easter Rising. While the UK at war, the IRA rebellion 'was seen as a stab in the back', and the British government charged the leaders of the rising with treason and executed them. (Taylor, p. 24)

heroically, UVF men 'died like cattle,' with 2,000 dead and over 3,000 wounded.⁴²³ Keith Jeffrey describes the carnage of the first day of the battle as the day 'after which nothing would ever be the same again for Ulster.'⁴²⁴ Indeed, the Battle of the Somme still plays an important part in Ulster's unionist narrative and is used by the present UVF as a 'key motif in its politics of resistance.'⁴²⁵

Upon their return from the battlefield, UVF men discovered that the Home Rule plan was, again, under consideration. To make things worse, in the aftermath of WWI the leading Catholic party, Sinn Fein, won a majority of seats in the Irish Parliament and unilaterally proclaimed an independent Irish Republic. Simultaneously, the IRA opened an armed campaign to force Britain to withdraw its forces from the island. The British Government that wanted to negotiate an understanding with Ireland responded with a new Home Rule Act (1920). In the new legislation the British government acknowledged the unionist desire to remain British and partitioned Ireland into northern (today's Northern Ireland) and southern (today's Republic of Ireland) territories. Accordingly, Britain was to withdraw its forces from twenty-six counties of Ireland's thirty-two counties, giving them a Home Rule status.

The six counties in the north (comprising the province of Ulster) that remained part of the United Kingdom were primarily inhabited by Protestants, while only one third of the population was Catholic. Hence, the Protestants could be expected to have a safe majority and were given a parliament in Belfast, known as Stormont, that was regarded as a 'Protestant parliament for a Protestant people.'⁴²⁶

⁴²³ Bruce, Steve. *The Edge of the Union* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), p. 3

⁴²⁴ Jeffrey, Keith. *Ireland and the Great War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 58

⁴²⁵ Graham, B. and Shirlow, P. "The Battle of the Somme in Ulster memory and identity", *Political Geography*, 21:7 (September 2002), p. 883

⁴²⁶ Taylor, p. 25



Source: <http://www.ireland-map.co.uk/map-of-ulster.htm>

Map 3: Map of Ulster (Northern Ireland)

Following the partition of Ireland, Protestants and Catholics alike found themselves on the wrong side of the new borders. Contrary to the Protestants who enjoyed the services of the British security and civil administrations, Catholics encountered increasing communal segregation and inequality. The Catholics were perceived as a Trojan horse and 'to most loyalists, the minority nationalist population was seen as the IRA's sleeping partner as it shared the same aim of achieving a united Ireland.'⁴²⁷ Inevitably, ethnic, economic and social tensions deteriorated into violence and bloodshed. The violence, which by then had spread all across the island of Ireland, gradually petered out with the signing of the 1921 Anglo-Irish Treaty establishing the autonomous Irish Free State in the south and leading to the withdrawal of the British forces from most of Ireland.

For nearly 40 years the political situation was fairly stable, despite low-scale attacks that continued in Northern Ireland, but hostility and animosity did not disappear. They re-surfaced in the late 1950s, when economic and social

⁴²⁷ Ibid, p. 25-26

policies strengthened discrimination and under-representation of the Catholic minority. A new wave of IRA violence against the local police force, the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC), led the Protestants to believe that Catholics were turning towards social agitation and subversion.⁴²⁸

The ever-present sectarian tension eventually exploded into deadly violence in the late 1960s, when Catholics and Protestants clashed over civil rights and political and social reforms. At first, the Protestants felt 'threatened by the Catholic demands for equal representation, equality and security.'⁴²⁹ They sought the protection of the local government but found the Prime Minister, Capt. Terence O'Neill, inattentive to their demands. O'Neill was known for his reconciliatory and liberal views and ecumenical beliefs that repeatedly 'touched on possibilities of cooperation between northern unionism and the southern nationalist State,' and therefore was denounced as favouring Roman Catholicism and capable of selling out Ulster.⁴³⁰ The Protestants had to look for protection elsewhere.

To counter the IRA's terrorist attacks and defiance of the rule of law, in 1966 Ulster unionists re-activated the UVF in Belfast and adopted the same motto – "For God and Ulster". Contrary to the original militia which was comprised of Protestant aristocracy and middle classes, the new UVF was based almost entirely on working-class members 'who were prepared to carry guns not placards.'⁴³¹ It was led by Gusty Spence, an ex-soldier whose father fought with the UVF in WWI, who in his biography straightforwardly describes the UVF's objective and his motives to join in: 'There was incipient rebellion and I had taken an oath to Her Majesty the Queen to defend her – it seems grandiose – against enemies foreign and domestic. I saw my service in the UVF as a

⁴²⁸ The IRA's "Border Campaign" (1956-1962) targeted British Army and RUC personnel and installations in Northern Ireland and was aimed to harness public support for the unification of the island.

⁴²⁹ Garfield, Andrew. "PIRA Lessons Learned: A Model of Terrorist Leadership Succession", *Low Intensity Conflict & Law Enforcement* (11:20, 2002), p. 272

⁴³⁰ Mansergh, Martin. "The background to the Irish peace process", in Cox, Michael, et.al (eds.) *A Farewell to Arms? Beyond the Good Friday Agreement* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), p. 27

⁴³¹ Taylor, p. 33

continuation of my British army service.'⁴³² Many UVF members under Spence's leadership genuinely believed that they were defending not only themselves against indiscriminate Catholic terrorism but also the British Crown, flag and the state.

Soon the UVF began its terrorist campaign, primarily involving shootings and bombings, against IRA members and Catholic civilians. Despite the IRA's reputation as the most infamous terrorist organisation in Northern Ireland, the first victims of the Troubles were killed by UVF members in May and June 1966.⁴³³ To this day, UVF members continuously deny accusations that they led or provoked the deterioration in the security situation in Northern Ireland. Others, however, claim otherwise arguing that the fact the UVF killed the first Catholic victim 'several years before the founding of the Provisionals, clearly show as false any suggestion that it was the Provisional IRA that started the Troubles.'⁴³⁴

In response to the UVF's killings, the British police, at the behest of the Northern Ireland government, acted quickly and arrested Spence and others, charged them with the murders and sentenced them to life imprisonment. Yet, even without Spence at the helms, the UVF managed to launch a terrorist campaign that matched and periodically surpassed the IRA's. Although it received far less media and scholarly attention than its Catholic counterparts, the UVF's transition from a relentless terrorist organisation into a peaceful political actor is, undoubtedly, worthy of a more in-depth analysis.

⁴³² Garland, Roy. *Gusty Spence* (Belfast: The Blackstaff Press, 2001), p. 48

⁴³³ Debate in the Northern Ireland Assembly, 17 January 2000; <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/record/reports/000117g.htm> (accessed 23/12/2007)

⁴³⁴ English, Richard. *Armed Struggle: The History of the IRA* (London: Pan Macmillan Ltd., 2003), p. 100

ORGANISATIONAL FACTORS

ROLE OF VIOLENCE

At first glance it may seem that violence has been an inherent feature in Irish history. For centuries violence was synonymous with the power struggle for dominance in Northern Ireland, and was perceived as 'an accepted vehicle of political communication.'⁴³⁵ However, it would be unjust to assume that Irish society and tradition are any different than other nations and peoples who were under "occupation" for many years. An alternative assertion is that violence in Northern Ireland was an outcome of a calculated analysis and aimed to achieve specific political objectives. As such, the UVF, even if defined as a pro-state organisation, was no different than other organisations that used terrorism as a tactic to threaten, coerce and achieve their political goals.

The primary objective of the 1912-UVF men was to protect the union with Britain and when they were called for duty in WWI, they served their nation heroically. Overall, they left behind a respectable heritage that is celebrated to this day among loyalists. In contrast, the central objective of the modern UVF was to instil fear in the wider Catholic population. Clearly, current UVF men may have used the same initials but they could not compete with their brethren's gallantry and they were often denounced as terrorists of the lowest kind.⁴³⁶ Indeed, nowadays the UVF is widely perceived as an outlaw organisation that has nothing in common with its patriotic predecessor.⁴³⁷

The modern-day UVF represented the radical and more militant end of the Protestant political spectrum. It firmly believed that achieving its aims required the use of violence against the Catholic population as a whole and IRA

⁴³⁵ Smyth, Jim. "A Discredited Cause? The IRA and Support for Political Violence", in Alexander, Yonah and O'Day, Alan (eds.) *Ireland's terrorist trauma: interdisciplinary perspectives* (London: Harvester, 1989), p. 116

⁴³⁶ McAuley, James. "Just Fighting to Survive: Loyalist Paramilitary Politics and the Progressive Unionist Party", *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 16:3 (Autumn 2004), p. 525

⁴³⁷ The UVF is a proscribed terrorist organisation under British legislation. In the US, the UVF is not designated as a terrorist organisation, but rather as a "group of concern"; <http://www.state.gov/s/ct/rls/crt/2006/82738.htm> (accessed 25/5/08)

members and supporters in particular.⁴³⁸ Typically, UVF members and supporters were those who had a strong sense of belonging to the six counties of Ulster and 'loyalty to the Protestant faith, Queen and country and the constitutional link with Britain.'⁴³⁹ The almost religious element in the connection between Ulster loyalists and Britain was noticeably expressed in a statement of a PUP leader: 'The historic calling for Loyalists strengthens their desire to remain within the United Kingdom whilst the choice to do so remains sacrosanct.'⁴⁴⁰ The UVF ideology was directly derived from the above statement and was manifested in three principles: defending the Protestant community against republican violence, rejecting a united Ireland under Catholic control and preserving Northern Ireland's British identity.

The notion of defending the Protestants and that 'it is right to respond to a republican murder campaign with killing,' was central to the UVF confrontational narrative.⁴⁴¹ The devotion of UVF men to the union with Britain was best described by Billy Wright, a notorious UVF senior commander, 'whose paramilitary career was to cost many Catholic lives,' that acknowledged he 'felt it was my duty to defend my people.'⁴⁴² Increasingly, Protestants felt that they 'were being pushed out of their traditional areas and workplaces, they were under siege, subject to genocidal attack, forced to retaliate,' and therefore 'only loyalist organisation vigilance and militancy could defend the Protestant population.'⁴⁴³ The responsibility to protect individuals and property was used by the UVF to justify their right and obligation to use violence against Catholics.

For years the name UVF was tantamount to distinctively brutal acts of violence, and therefore the organisation suffered from a negative reputation and was condemned as an 'unlawful organisation whose activities were

⁴³⁸ Edwards, pp. 150-154

⁴³⁹ Taylor, p. 1

⁴⁴⁰ McAuley, p. 524

⁴⁴¹ Bruce, Steve. "Turf War and Peace: Loyalist Paramilitaries since 1994", *Terrorism and Political Violence*, 16:3 (Autumn 2004), p. 503

⁴⁴² English, p. 172

⁴⁴³ Ruane, J. and Todd, J. *The Dynamics of Conflict in Northern Ireland: Power, Conflict and Emancipation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 95

directed to asserting and maintaining Protestant ascendancy...by overt acts of terror.'⁴⁴⁴ Certainly, the extremist and ruthless image was articulated in a threatening manifesto that was published on the eve of the UVF's foundation in May 1966: 'From this day, we declare war against the IRA and its splinter groups. Known IRA men will be executed mercilessly and without hesitation ...We are heavily armed Protestants dedicated to this cause.'⁴⁴⁵

A 1974 announcement further describes the UVF's retaliatory strategy, that was based on the common loyalist idiom "terrorising the terrorists":

We believe, rightly or wrongly, that the only effective way to beat the terror machine was to employ greater terrorism against its operatives...by bombing the heart of Provisional enclaves we attempted to terrorise the nationalist community into demanding that the Provisionals either cease their campaign or move out of the ghetto area...we believed we could force the Provisionals out of business or at least cause a drastic reduction in their operational activity.⁴⁴⁶

The UVF went to great lengths to fulfill this declaration and its members adamantly believed that it was both necessary and just to use violence to defeat the nationalist aspirations. Since many members had previous military experience or criminal records, they were keen and even expected to exercise their violent skills. A particular vicious and petrifying illustration of such capabilities was a UVF unit, known as the "Shankill Butchers", which used to abduct, torture and carve up Catholic victims with knives and hatchets. These sadistic horrors signified an unprecedented level of brutality unfamiliar even in the death-struck society of Northern Ireland.⁴⁴⁷

The nature of the UVF's terrorist attacks was mainly sectarian and indiscriminate. Many of these attacks were aimed against public places that were frequented by Catholics without targeting specific individuals known as

⁴⁴⁴ Taylor, p. 40

⁴⁴⁵ Donohue, Laura. "Regulating Northern Ireland: The Special Powers Acts, 1922-1972, *The Historical Journal*, 41:4 (December 1998), p. 1113

⁴⁴⁶ Bruce, *The Red Hand*, p. 144

⁴⁴⁷ Dillon, Martin. *The Shankill Butchers* (New York: Routledge, 1999)

IRA members. On 17 May 1974, the UVF demonstrated that its promise to employ greater terrorism was not just empty words, when it nearly simultaneously detonated four car bombs in the streets of Dublin and Monaghan, killing 33 people and injuring 258 – the deadliest attack in a single day in the history of the conflict.

Contrary to many terrorist attacks by republican and loyalist organisations, no prior warning was issued before the explosions. Usually proud and vocal in their use of violence, UVF members refrained from claiming responsibility for the horrendous attack, probably because of the high death toll. No one has ever been brought to justice. Almost twenty years later, the UVF admitted that its members perpetrated the attack.⁴⁴⁸ Nonetheless, David Ervine, formerly a senior UVF member and later leader of the PUP, insisted that the attack was a natural and legitimate response to republican violence. When asked what the purpose of the attack was he simply answered that the UVF could not sit idly by when the IRA targeted innocent Protestants and therefore 'they were returning the serve.'⁴⁴⁹

Generally, UVF men had freedom to devise and carry out attacks, which subsequently backfired. Bruce identifies the lack of effective control as one of the reasons why UVF members were perceived as murderous thugs and not as defenders of the Protestant community. He writes that UVF 'operations were only surgical and controlled as the skills and interests of the individuals in that particular group allowed them to be, which was often not much.'⁴⁵⁰ Indeed, the Dublin and Monaghan bombings were meticulously planned and well orchestrated, but they were the exception rather than the rule, and many other fatal attacks were perpetrated through exploiting the organisation's loose command structure.

⁴⁴⁸ <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/othelem/organ/uvf/uvf150793.htm> (accessed 12/5/2011)

⁴⁴⁹ Taylor, p. 126

⁴⁵⁰ Bruce, *The Red Hand*, p. 114

Despite the brutal nature of the UVF's terror campaign in the 1970s, as time progressed and both Protestants and Catholics were engaged in political talks, members began to doubt the 'tactical effectiveness in reaching the UVF's objectives through violence.'⁴⁵¹ Consequently, from the early 1980s the UVF entered a period characterised by a behavioural change, self-criticism and moral reservations. First and foremost, the UVF was constantly aware of the damaging effect of unrestrained violence. Senior UVF commanders genuinely made an effort to exercise firm control over members and operations and to set boundaries in order to morally distinguish their operations from IRA's terrorism and to rebuild the UVF's reputation among Protestants.

The efforts to display a centralised command and control became particularly essential from the early 1990s onwards, when ceasefires and agreements were negotiated and the UVF did not want to appear as destabilising the peace process. Additionally, as prospects for reconciliation were high and the need to defend the Protestant community decreased, the UVF wished to reinforce its image of a responsible organisation at this politically sensitive point in time.

Two examples specifically demonstrate the organisational state of mind in the mid 1990s. The first is the UVF's exceptional statement declaring its acceptance of the 1994 ceasefire. Gusty Spence, who was given the honour to read the text, chose to appeal to the wider public in Northern Ireland and apologise for decades of indiscriminate attacks and thousands of victims:

In all sincerity, we offer to the loved ones of all innocent victims over the past twenty-five years abject and true remorse. No amount of words will compensate for the intolerable suffering they have undergone during the conflict.⁴⁵²

The second is the decision of UVF senior command in July 1996, to expel Billy Wright and his team for perpetrating unwarranted attacks, insubordination

⁴⁵¹ Horgan, John. *Walking Away from Terrorism* (Oxon: Routledge, 2009), p. 56

⁴⁵² Garland, p. 3

and defiance of the Belfast HQ orders during the 1994 ceasefire.⁴⁵³ Although these acts did not end UVF attacks completely, they made an impression of a genuine attempt to convey a self-restrained, less violent and more peaceful agenda.

In conclusion, the UVF was clearly a vicious terrorist organisation that devastated the lives of many families in Northern Ireland. It used the same tactics to achieve similar objectives as any other terrorist movement in similar conflicts. However, in the application of violence, the UVF stands out in at least one important aspect; the leadership and majority of its cadre followed the Protestant desire to end the armed campaign. Particular interest was the understanding that the continuation of violence was politically futile, and that disengagement from terrorism was essential to allow the peace talks to succeed and a compromise to be reached.

PERCEPTION OF THE OPPONENT

Like most other terrorist organisations, the UVF had several opponents with whom it simultaneously fought against or was engaged with. On one hand republicans as well as ordinary Catholics were considered enemies. On the other, the Protestant unionist leadership was treated as untrustworthy.

Categorically, the UVF believed that Catholics must be defeated should Protestants want to prolong the union with Britain. To this end, violence against Catholics was permissible, as explained by Henry Sinnerton:

The purpose of the UVF was to kill. Their analysis was based on the argument that since the Catholic community was harbouring the Provos, the way to damage the Provos was to hurt the Catholic community until the Provos would be expelled or renounced. This policy depended on killing ordinary Catholics, any Catholic, rather

⁴⁵³ McDonald, *Trimble*, p. 170

than the specific targeting of Provo volunteers and commanders.⁴⁵⁴

Demonizing the republican enemy and brainwashing the Protestant community to resist any opportunity that might lead to Catholic primacy, led many loyalists to hold such hateful views. Soon conspiracy theories followed and UVF members were convinced that there was a Catholic plot to establish a united Ireland and believed that successive British governments 'had an ignoble tradition of doing deals with the republican enemy behind Ulster Protestant backs.'⁴⁵⁵

The indoctrination process was managed by radical unionist leaders, most notably amongst them was the Reverend Ian Paisley, who espoused 'keeping Northern Ireland British and, if that fails, keeping Northern Ireland out of the Irish Republic.'⁴⁵⁶ His charismatic personality and belligerent rhetoric largely shaped the loyalist mindset, and especially the UVF's. Paisley began his political career in the 1960s by expressing popular anti-Catholic views and initiating public rallies, in which he called for organised defence against IRA attacks to complement the army and the police. Later, as leader of hard-line unionism, Paisley was instrumental in portraying Northern Ireland as the imagined homeland for the Protestants, and pledged that it 'would take whatever steps it thinks fit to maintain Northern Ireland's constitutional position within the United Kingdom.'⁴⁵⁷

Nowadays, Paisley is largely recognised as the unionist political leader who reached a compromise with nationalists and reinstituted the power-sharing government in Northern Ireland.⁴⁵⁸ However, Protestants who listened to him in his early days admit that during his sermons he used vile and

⁴⁵⁴ Sinnerton, Henry. *David Ervine: Uncharted Waters* (London: Brandon, 2002), p. 37

⁴⁵⁵ McDonald, *Trimble*, p. 138

⁴⁵⁶ Bruce, *The Edge of the Union*, p. 32

⁴⁵⁷ Taylor, p. 35

⁴⁵⁸ On 8 May 2007 Ian Paisley was elected as the First Minister of Northern Ireland and leader of the Democratic Unionist Party, the largest political party in the Northern Ireland Assembly. The position of Deputy First Minister was given to Sinn Féin's Martin McGuinness. In June 2008, Paisley resigned from both his government and party positions.

inflammatory theological rhetoric.⁴⁵⁹ A particular case in point is his reference to the Queen Mother's meeting with the Pope as 'committing spiritual fornication and adultery with the anti-Christ.'⁴⁶⁰ Although there is no solid evidence that Paisley was involved in or knew about terrorist attacks and he firmly claims that he had always directed his followers to take a law-abiding political path, listening to his provocative oratory certainly led others to violence. Billy Mitchell, a senior UVF commander and later the PUP's political strategist who admitted that he idolised Paisley, explained that by listening to him 'you felt part of the cause...part of the organised band of people – the chosen few – who would defend Ulster.'⁴⁶¹

Undoubtedly, Paisley's words played a vital role in shaping the UVF's perception of the Catholics. His inspiration significantly augmented the devotion to protect the union at all costs by using violence to save Ulster from falling into the hands of the Catholics. In such a radical mindset, and due to a lack of solid ideology, the chosen strategy as articulated by Gusty Spence, was 'if you can't get an IRA man, get a Taig [Catholic]'.⁴⁶²

The UVF's view of the unionist political leadership was not positive either. It treated unionist leaders with distrust, suspicion and hostility, accusing them of failure to mount a coherent opposition campaign and mishandling the loyalist cause and the peace process. An article published in the UVF's "Combat" magazine expressed this view:

Working-class loyalists have been exploited, misinformed, misled and divided by the establishment Unionist parties...who have vested personal and financial interests in the maintenance of a divided loyalist movement.⁴⁶³

Among UVF members 'there was a growing realisation that loyalists had been exploited historically by unionist politicians who cynically tolerated violence

⁴⁵⁹ Taylor, p. 2

⁴⁶⁰ Bardon, Jonathan. *A History of Ulster* (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 1992), p. 631

⁴⁶¹ Taylor, p. 36

⁴⁶² Dillon, p. 11-12

⁴⁶³ *Combat Magazine*, Issue 5 (2002), p. 7

for the unionist cause and then preached law and order after the loyalists acted.'⁴⁶⁴ Gusty Spence was even more blatant about it: 'the attitude of these people [the unionist leaders] is they want you hanged.'⁴⁶⁵

Unionist politicians were repeatedly condemned for using loyalists as cannon-fodder by covertly goading members to carry out further attacks, but publicly denouncing and distancing them from the Protestant public consensus. Dawn Purvis, the former leader of the PUP, stresses that the UVF blamed the unionist politicians for using manipulative methods in order to preserve their dominance in power over the whole of the Northern Irish electorate.⁴⁶⁶ Even Paisley, the father of radical unionism and a hero in the eyes of many loyalists, was at times seen by the UVF as an opportunist, manipulator 'and a coward who makes encouragingly militant noises but then condemns the gunmen when they turn his rhetoric into actions.'⁴⁶⁷

UVF's criticism against the unionist leadership was not limited to words but was translated into actions as well. Most notably were the steps taken against Prime Minister O'Neill who pursued rapprochement with the Republic of Ireland. O'Neill's decision to proscribe the UVF as a terrorist organisation designated him a legitimate target. To confront his "betrayal", the UVF formulated a strategy 'to halt O'Neill's "bridge building" policies and maybe even cause a reaction against him within the Unionist Party, which would force his resignation.'⁴⁶⁸ Accordingly, the UVF carried out a series of bombings against water and electricity installations in Northern Ireland intended to create the impression that they were perpetrated by the IRA. Spence recounted that the UVF committed those attacks to put pressure on O'Neill hoping that he 'would be removed and someone more amenable to this group's thinking would

⁴⁶⁴ Sinnerton, p. 131

⁴⁶⁵ Garland, p. 49

⁴⁶⁶ Interview with Dawn Purvis, who at that time served as Leader of the PUP, at Stormont, Belfast, 24/3/09

⁴⁶⁷ Bruce, *The Edge of the Union*, p. 33

⁴⁶⁸ Moloney, Ed and Pollack, Andy. *Paisley* (Dublin: Poolbeg, 1986), p. 136

be put in place.'⁴⁶⁹ Ultimately, the UVF's attacks had their desired effect; O'Neill was defeated in the 1969 general elections and resigned.

At times the UVF showed the same vigour in contending with unionist politicians as with IRA gunmen. The high price that loyalist families paid throughout the conflict and their support in the peace process, was a source for deep contention between the UVF and the unionist leadership. The following heated exchange between one unionist representative and David Ervine of the PUP, best illustrates the hostile relations between the two camps. When a unionist leader supported opposition to the peace process, Ervine responded: 'That's easy for you to say, safe as you and your family are in the suburbs. But if there's war it's we and our sons who'll do the fighting and dying. We want this process because it's our only hope for peace.'⁴⁷⁰

By and large, the UVF felt that it was its duty to challenge the republican armed campaign against the Protestant community. In a situation where the British state failed to meet its contractual obligations to the Protestant citizens of Northern Ireland, the UVF was perceived as part of a wider response to the political situation. Ian Paisley's role in playing on the fears of Protestants from nationalist hegemony in Northern Ireland, contributed greatly to the loyalist perception of Catholics. Edwards summarises that Paisley was 'intimately involved in fueling many hard-line attitudes harboured by those loyalists who took up arms.'⁴⁷¹ The growing Protestant insecurity and the belief that Catholics are the source of all troubles, allowed the UVF to launch its own campaign of sectarian violence.

In addition to the animosity towards the Catholic enemy, the UVF expressed deep mistrust of unionist politicians. Dawn Purvis best describes the loyalist view of the relations with the unionist parties: 'There was a love-hate relationship where unionist leaders sought to control and manipulate loyalist

⁴⁶⁹ Garland, p. 54

⁴⁷⁰ Mitchell, George. *Making Peace* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), p. 186

⁴⁷¹ Edwards, p. 151

paramilitaries but at the same time disown them.'⁴⁷² The positive outcome of the division in the Protestant community was that it led the UVF to develop its own political platform, which presented an alternative and promoted a more inclusive form of unionism. According to Taylor, the PUP represented the new breed of loyalist politicians who wanted to reach a compromise that would end the war but safeguard the province's place within the United Kingdom.'⁴⁷³ Clearly, the establishment of the PUP and the political course that the party led had a mitigating effect on the UVF's militant strategy. Also, the profound disappointment from the poor performance of the unionist leadership and the desire to bring a better future for Northern Ireland, served as catalysts for the UVF's support of the peace process.

SPLIT IN THE RANKS

From the Troubles' first day the loyalist camp was deeply fragmented and failed to maintain a strong and unified paramilitary front. While the IRA is regularly regarded as the principal republican terrorist organisation, there is no single equivalent among the loyalists.⁴⁷⁴ For many years the UVF had to operate parallel to another authentic and formidable loyalist terrorist organisation and for a short while also with its own rebellious faction. Nearly since its inception, the UVF competed with the strong and popular Ulster Defence Association (UDA). Later in the 1990s, following a split in the UVF ranks, it was challenged by the dissident Loyalist Volunteer Force (LVF). Overall, an analysis of the UVF's organisational factors clearly shows that competing with another grassroots paramilitary organisation while dealing with a splinter organisation had a considerable impact on its political thinking.

⁴⁷² Interview with Dawn Purvis

⁴⁷³ Taylor, p. 216

⁴⁷⁴ The Republican front was led and dominated by the PIRA, but it certainly was not the only operational terrorist organisation. Since 1974 it was active alongside the Irish National Liberation Army (INLA), a Marxist militant faction that split from the Official IRA. In 1999 the organisation declared a ceasefire and in 2009 it formally vowed to pursue its 'objectives from now on by exclusively peaceful political struggle.'

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/northern_ireland/8301241.stm (accessed 9/10/2013)

Although from the 1960s until the 1980s the UVF was the leading loyalist terrorist organisation, the UDA had a powerful presence in the Protestant community that at times overshadowed the UVF, particularly in terms of public support, financial resources and political influence. Contrary to the UVF, which maintained a small and experienced cadre organised in clandestine cells, the UDA emphasised 'its ambition to be a mass social and political movement.'⁴⁷⁵ It sprung from a large number of vigilante groups, formed across Belfast in the early 1970s to protect Protestant working-class neighbourhoods against IRA attacks. Quickly it developed more advanced political aspirations and espoused a similar ideology to the UVF. The UDA exploited the fact that the UVF was legally banned to recruit members and funds and it grew so rapidly that by the mid-1970s it was considerably larger than the secretive UVF. In fact, it became the largest of all the armed organisations in Northern Ireland, commanding over 50,000 members.⁴⁷⁶

Like any other two competing organisations that appeal to the same constituency, the UVF and the UDA 'have rarely been on good terms for long.'⁴⁷⁷ Despite its motto "law before violence" and overt political aspirations, the UDA, like the UVF, was very much involved in terrorism.⁴⁷⁸ Its members, in an attempt to avoid similar proscription, attacked IRA men and innocent Catholics under the *nom de guerre* of Ulster Freedom Fighters (UFF), killing more than 250 people (second only to the UVF amongst loyalist terrorist organisations).⁴⁷⁹ Since both were extremely passionate and recruited from and operated within the same areas, the rivalry often resulted in an open warfare over issues such as weapons, money, territorial control and personal loyalties.⁴⁸⁰ However, the UVF had an important advantage over the UDA; its members were better trained and well equipped while the typical UDA militants were mostly

⁴⁷⁵ Bruce, *The Edge of the Union*, p. 5

⁴⁷⁶ Taylor, p. 83

⁴⁷⁷ Bruce, *Red Hand*, p. 124

⁴⁷⁸ Horgan, p. 99

⁴⁷⁹ In 1992, the UDA was eventually proscribed as a terrorist organisation by British and Irish governments; <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/sutton/book/index.html> (accessed 1/5/08)

⁴⁸⁰ Taylor, p. 112

inadequately armed local Protestants. A UDA member candidly admitted that the UVF 'were more militant than us, and they had guns. They also recruited soldiers who fought terrorists in Cyprus and Borneo, whereas we really hadn't a clue. I'd never fought anybody in my life.'⁴⁸¹ Accordingly, UVF men mostly belittled the UDA's armed campaign as described by one UVF member: 'We were never impressed by them. Aside from the killings, many of which were very dubious, all they ever did was break windows and let car tyres down.'⁴⁸²

Like the UVF, the UDA took it upon itself to act as 'an army of last stand to fight the civil war in Ulster.'⁴⁸³ In doing so the UDA was not only a proactive Protestant organisation but necessarily a challenging force to the UVF. Consequently, instead of advocating for a unified political goal, the two leading loyalist factions were 'competing with each other to be the most effective representative of the community's political ambitions.'⁴⁸⁴ Although the UVF was more involved in killing republicans and controlled the loyalist camp through the 1970s, the UDA did not lag behind. Ironically, in such a violent environment, in which the stronger had better chances of surviving and gaining political dominance, the primary victim was the Protestant community. Inter-communal clashes occurred almost on a regular basis, and deadly retaliations inflicted numerous Protestant casualties. Soon it was clear to leaders of both organisations that the rivalry gravely damaged the overall Protestant cause, which was in a state of decay since the paramilitaries were constantly fighting each other. Consequently, a degree of understanding was achieved after senior UVF and UDA commanders met and agreed that 'in the event of ill-feelings resulting in violence, weapons under no circumstances would be used.'⁴⁸⁵ Despite the mutual understanding, violence resumed because contrary to the IRA's centralised structure and more disciplined members, the loyalist

⁴⁸¹ Crawford, Colin. *Inside the UDA: Volunteers and Violence* (London: Pluto Press, 2003), p. 58-59

⁴⁸² Cusack and McDonald, p. 283

⁴⁸³ Crawford, p. 23

⁴⁸⁴ Neumann, "The Imperfect Peace: Paramilitary Violence in Northern Ireland", p. 131

⁴⁸⁵ Bruce, *The Red Hand*, p. 125

terrorists could not control their ranks since they 'didn't have the experience of handling men that could have sorted out those kinds of problems.'⁴⁸⁶

The delicate balance-of-power within the loyalist camp was further undermined with the formation of another militant group. The increased sense of insecurity and siege mentality prevalent among some loyalist groups resulted in 1996 in the establishment of a breakaway faction within the UVF, known as the Loyalist Volunteer Force (LVF). The new terrorist organisation opposed the 1994 ceasefire and the developing peace process. By joining the leading unionist parties (such as Paisley's DUP) in the rejectionist camp, the LVF temporarily enjoyed impressive public support. Although small in size, the LVF was an influential actor in the loyalist net of organisations, and had a substantial impact on the UVF's transition from violence to politics.

The new hard-line dissident organisation disagreed ideologically with the UVF's adherence to the truce and decision to support the peace process. More precisely the LVF challenged the UVF's authority and 'attempted to thwart the prospect of a political compromise between unionists and nationalists by engaging in a blatant campaign of sectarian slaughter.'⁴⁸⁷ The split led to another outbreak of communal hostilities and re-escalated the level of violence in Northern Ireland. In the period before the Good Friday Agreement, when republican and loyalist violence greatly subsided, the LVF managed to take the lead in the loyalist armed attacks killing 26 people.⁴⁸⁸

The leader of the LVF, Billy Wright, who felt more sympathetic to the political philosophy of Paisley, was the spirit behind the organisation's opposition to the peace talks. He believed that he could unite the loyalist organisations under his leadership, and be portrayed as the 'military savior of the Protestant people.'⁴⁸⁹ Wright denounced the UVF and the PUP as being 'totally out of step with grassroots loyalist opinion,' and benefited from the tacit

⁴⁸⁶ Ibid, p. 127

⁴⁸⁷ Cusack and McDonald, p. 355

⁴⁸⁸ Bruce, "Turf War and Peace: Loyalist Paramilitaries since 1994", p. 502

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid, p. 512

support of many within the loyalist camp.⁴⁹⁰ The notable success of the LVF led the UVF to the realisation that 'Wright was now establishing an alternative centre of power,' and thus he was accused of treason and was given an ultimatum: leave the country or be killed.⁴⁹¹ The UVF's manhunt was preceded by the police who arrested Billy Wright in March 1997 and sent him to serve eight years in the Maze prison.⁴⁹² Much to the UVF's relief, Wright, 'the UVF's public enemy number one,' was murdered in prison in December 1997 by members of the republican splinter group, the Irish National Liberation Army.⁴⁹³ Interestingly, Crawford suggests that Wright's death was a result of collaboration between British, Protestant and Catholic elements that wished to remove a major and popular obstacle from their way, each for his own reasons.⁴⁹⁴ Regardless of the motives, with Wright's death the LVF lost its vibrancy and was heading towards demobilisation. The murder sparked another brutal cycle of tit-for-tat killings between Protestants and Catholics, but despite momentary setbacks in negotiations the peace process was not severely damaged and a few months later the Good Friday Agreement was signed.

Although the LVF opposed the Good Friday Agreement, after Wright's disappearance its ranks thinned rapidly and in effect it ceased to exist. A week before the May 1998 referendum, the LVF declared a ceasefire stating that the 'war is over for good,' and agreeing to decommission its arms and explosives.⁴⁹⁵ In doing so, the LVF, moved from an anti-agreement position towards acceptance of the new political order, thus becoming 'the first terrorist group in Irish history to surrender weapons voluntarily.'⁴⁹⁶ The success of the LVF's transition from violence to peaceful action led the UVF to seriously question the

⁴⁹⁰ Cusack and McDonald, p. 348

⁴⁹¹ Taylor, p. 241

⁴⁹² Incidentally, another demonstration of his growing power and popularity is seen in his demand (which was accepted) for a separate wing in prison for himself, his LVF men and other Ulstermen who opposed the loyalist ceasefire.

⁴⁹³ Cusack and McDonald, p. 349

⁴⁹⁴ Crawford, p. 213

⁴⁹⁵ http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/events/northern_ireland/latest_news/147798.stm (accessed 27/5/2008)

⁴⁹⁶ McDonald, *Trimble*, p. 274

usefulness and tactical value of its armed campaign. Cusack and McDonald write that the disappearance of the LVF triggered an internal debate within the UVF regarding its future. They quote a senior UVF commander who admitted that 'the LVF's demise enabled the organisation to consider its own dissolution.'⁴⁹⁷

Since the 1960s the attention and support of the extreme loyalist community in Northern Ireland was divided between the UVF, the UDA and the LVF. It seems that the fragmented nature of the loyalist community was, in fact, a destabilizing factor that had an impact on the decisions and actions of the UVF.⁴⁹⁸ Operating in a state of constant opposition with organisations that have similar objectives and strategy was a strong incentive for the UVF to find new ways to increase its political power and popularity. When it had the opportunity, the UVF and the PUP chose to distance themselves from the rejectionist elements within the loyalist community by presenting a more moderate attitude, announcing a ceasefire and supporting the peace process. They wished to be part of the negotiations and hoped for its success not only for the benefit of Ulster but for their own survival.

LEVEL OF PUBLIC SUPPORT

In the case of the modern UVF, the level of public support is particularly crucial in terms of the contribution to its political integration. Certainly, it is the factor that was affected the most by its designation as a *pro-state* terrorist organisation. By definition a pro-state terrorist organisation tends to be 'less popular with the population they claim to defend,' since it has to battle over public support against a state's constitutional institutions.⁴⁹⁹ Indeed, the UVF was relatively popular among loyalists and enjoyed large pockets of support within working-class areas, which experienced most of the sectarian violence.

⁴⁹⁷ Cusack and McDonald, p. 427

⁴⁹⁸ Gillespie, Gordon. "Noises Off: Loyalists after the Agreement", in Cox, Michael, et.al (eds.) *A Farewell to Arms? Beyond the Good Friday Agreement* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), p. 140

⁴⁹⁹ Bruce, "Northern Ireland: Reappraising Loyalist Violence", p. 117

Yet, it could not compete with the government, the security apparatuses, the civil administration and the judicial system, that was far more stable and powerful in comparison to an illegal terrorist organisation.

From the outset, the UVF was inferior to the state, be it Northern Ireland or the United Kingdom, in what it could offer Protestants to attract new recruits, funds and political support. This was particularly important when it came down to filling the ranks of the UVF with motivated and skilled young men. Since the state's official services could offer legitimate outlets for participation and far more respectable and well-paid alternatives, the UVF was unable to match this with tangible rewards.

While the UVF's stronghold was Belfast's working-class, 'it drew little support from the wider Protestant community and was firmly denounced by the middle classes and by religious leaders.'⁵⁰⁰ Generally, the Protestant middle-class was less affected by the sectarian violence, thus they were less inclined to join the loyalist terrorist organisations. Moreover, unlike the working-class Protestants who saw themselves as Ulster people, the middle-class drew its identity from Britain rather than the local heritage.⁵⁰¹ Inevitably, a working-class Protestant who was motivated enough to actively take part in the campaign against the IRA, often did so by joining the high-status, well-rewarded and legitimate security services. A majority of Protestants who wished to play a part in defending their people, enlisted into the police force or the army, whereas the least capable members of the Protestant community joined the loyalist organisations. Yet, it would be wrong to suggest that those who preferred to join the UVF lacked in patriotism, devotion and motivation to fight the IRA.⁵⁰²

⁵⁰⁰ Bruce, *The Red Hand*, p. 268

⁵⁰¹ Wallis, R. Bruce, S. and Taylor, D. " Ethnicity and Evangelicalism: Ian Paisley and Protestant Politics in Ulster", *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 29:2 (April 1987), p. 293-313

⁵⁰² An interview with a UVF former member can be found in Horgan, John. *Walking Away from Terrorism*, pp. 60-63

Indeed, those who eventually joined the UVF “contributed greatly” to its image as a vicious terrorist organisation. One incident that dealt a devastating blow to the UVF’s popularity, and aspiration to be perceived as an authentic political power in Northern Ireland, was the “Miami Showband” massacre in July 1975. A UVF team disguised as uniformed soldiers killed three members of the famous Irish band and brought shame on the Protestant community and international condemnation for the UVF. Atrocities of this kind blemished the entire Protestant community that mostly considered itself as ‘decent law-abiding and reluctant soldiers.’⁵⁰³ The idea that Protestants would kill innocent civilians contradicted everything they believed in; an unthinkable act that was carried out by people of their own strict upbringing. Gradually, the Protestant majority was sceptical of the UVF’s claim to defend them from the nationalist expansion. Although at times the Protestants were willing to recognise the UVF’s role as the ‘avenger of IRA violence,’ they were hesitant to accept it as their political representatives since they maintained a clear division between politics and violence, and there was ‘little or no enthusiasm for a blurring of the boundaries.’⁵⁰⁴

The fact that the UVF was engaged in random sectarian killings, which was regarded as the lowest kind of violence, was even more detrimental to its public support. The majority of Protestants believed that it was the role of the police to provide security and not uncontrolled and illegal vigilante groups. Consequently, it was extremely difficult for the UVF to justify the attacks and preserve a steady level of support, and it was compelled to repair its reputation by, for instance, issuing repeated calls to refrain from sectarian violence. To that extent, Gusty Spence, the UVF’s leader, condemned in a televised interview in 1972 the sectarian violence and announced that ‘random killing is to be deplored at any time and I would say to anyone engaged in sectarian murder “Cease it!”.’⁵⁰⁵ In January 1974, the UVF announced that it has ‘never sanctioned the execution of any person on account of his religious or political opinions and

⁵⁰³ Bruce, “Northern Ireland: Reappraising Loyalist Violence”, p. 120

⁵⁰⁴ Bruce, *The Red Hand*, p.133

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid. p. 110

we call upon all paramilitary organisations to do their utmost to ensure that such activities cease forthwith.'⁵⁰⁶

In the early 1990s the UVF attempted to find other channels to attract public support. The leaders suggested to 'reduce the amount of ill-directed and random violence,' and instead to 'increase the amount of community work and political action.'⁵⁰⁷ In accordance with the new strategy, the UVF issued a press statement in which it called for all loyalist armed organisations:

To desist from their present murder campaign and to channel their energies and resources into some form of constructive action...the indiscriminate killing of Ulstermen on account of their religious beliefs can do nothing whatever to preserve the Protestant liberties and restore democracy to Northern Ireland.⁵⁰⁸

Clearly, the UVF's new approach did not bring about the expected results, and sectarian violence continued on all fronts. Subsequently, UVF leaders sensed that the organisation was losing the battle for hearts and minds of Protestants at home, and they were forced to find other creative ways to bolster popular support, funds and new recruits. Therefore, they resorted to the heritage of the brave members who fought courageously in WWI. The reformation of the loyalist paramilitary organisation under the same title and motto was intended to provide members with equal standing and respectability within the Protestant community. Of course, it would also serve to mobilise the Protestant community to support UVF members and policies. The modern-day organisation claimed to be a legitimate descendant of the 1912-UVF, that at its peak consisted of more than 200,000 members. It even used the Battle of the Somme as a central narrative to promote the UVF's role as protector of the Protestant community. An article published in 2008 in the UVF's "Combat" magazine stressed the patriotism of the heroes of the Great War and the sacrifice made by their successors:

⁵⁰⁶ *Belfast Telegraph*, 29/1/1974

⁵⁰⁷ Bruce, *The Red hand*, p. 131

⁵⁰⁸ *Ibid.* p. 115

They were the bravest of the brave, willing to stand against the mighty Kaiser for King and Empire For God And Ulster...They were men and boys like you and I, ordinary, hard working, family guys, who had a passionate love for their country. They were not conscripted, they volunteered!⁵⁰⁹

The leaders of the present UVF were hoping to draw on the history of Ulstermen and 'to reap the benefits of legitimacy and public sympathy by association.'⁵¹⁰ They believed that 'the leitmotif of Ulster's blood sacrifice to the British crown and state' during WWI would assist both in their struggle against the IRA and in boosting popularity.⁵¹¹

By the mid 1970s and early 1980s the popularity of the UVF plunged due to improvements in the political and security climates in Northern Ireland. While the republicans claimed their base of legitimacy for violence in the need to defend their rights against the Protestant oppressors, the loyalists could not do the same since the state's security forces were responsible for law and order and stripped the Protestant paramilitaries of their justification of existence. In fact, 'the success of the security forces in reducing the overall level of violence and sense of instability has removed a lot of the perceived need for the UVF.'⁵¹² Consequently, the UVF was compelled to look beyond the borders of Ulster to raise public awareness and funds, mainly in the US but also in Scotland and other European countries. Yet, unlike the IRA, which was very popular internationally, the UVF was 'short of friends outside Ulster and almost completely shunned outside Britain.'⁵¹³

The UVF received some support from Scotland, which had close historical links to Ireland. Some Presbyterian Scots had strong anti-Catholic sentiment, so it was fairly simple for the UVF to open offices in Scotland to

⁵⁰⁹ *Combat Magazine*, Issue 9 (2008), p. 2

⁵¹⁰ Steenkamp, p. 160

⁵¹¹ Graham and Shirlow, p. 884

⁵¹² Bruce, *The Red Hand*, p. 148

⁵¹³ *Ibid*, p. 150

support their brethren in Northern Ireland.⁵¹⁴ The local branches succeeded in supplying a small number of weapons and raising an annual sum of £100,000 to support UVF operations. Nevertheless, the Scottish support was marginal and the local offices were closed after several police arrests. The significance of the Scottish support lay, according to Bruce, not in the weapons or the money but rather in the 'morale-boosting consequence of knowing that the loyalist cause has some support outside Northern Ireland.'⁵¹⁵

Since the UVF did not hold any appeal for international left-wing political and terrorist movements, it ended up 'with some strange bedfellows.'⁵¹⁶ It briefly attracted attention from racist and fascist groups in Western Europe, which were electorally insignificant in domestic politics and therefore sought to associate themselves with more popular causes. For a short period in the 1970s the UVF had links to Neo-Nazi factions, but the initial intention to purchase weapons and explosives from them was left unfulfilled, since in return they asked the UVF to attack Jewish targets in Belfast. Even when external support was very much desired, the UVF could not bring itself to become linked with Nazi groups, especially because of the British army's history of fighting Germany and the UVF's role in WWI. Also, evoking Hitler and Germany disturbed the Protestant unionist psyche and therefore the contacts with these groups were abandoned.⁵¹⁷

The combination of brutal violence, competition with the state agencies, the improvement of personal security in Northern Ireland and the association with dubious groups outside the UK, significantly hindered the UVF's efforts to mobilise public support for its armed and political campaigns. Clearly, when unionists felt that the security services were doing well in protecting them and that IRA violence was no longer an imminent threat, they no longer needed "the

⁵¹⁴ In 1979 a UVF team bombed two pubs in Glasgow frequented by Catholics – the only attack carried out in Scotland.

⁵¹⁵ Bruce, *The Red Hand*, p. 165

⁵¹⁶ McIlheney, Colin. "Arbiters of Ulster's Destiny? The Military Role of the Protestant Paramilitaries in Northern Ireland", *Conflict Quarterly*, 5:2 (Spring 1985), p. 36

⁵¹⁷ Bruce, *The Red Hand*, pp. 150-153

services" of the UVF. Consequently, Protestants became 'less tolerant of the vices of their putative defenders.'⁵¹⁸ It seems that the UVF was left with no other choice but to abandon terrorism in favour of legitimate political participation if it wished to play a constructive part in Northern Ireland's politics. The UVF realised that 'paramilitary organisations could not provide an alternative to mainstream Unionist parties,' and therefore gradually reduced its violent activity and at the same time put more focus on its political agenda.⁵¹⁹

DOMESTIC FACTORS

This section examines the influence of the overall British policy to resolve the Northern Ireland conflict on the UVF's decision to participate in the constitutional political system. In principle, the British policy was intended to address the grievances of both unionist and nationalist communities and maintain law and order in the province. Yet, its effects were cardinal to the UVF decisions and actions and resulted in the organisation playing an important role in the peace process, mainly due to its ability to mobilise the loyalist camp in supporting the talks.

Historically, the British policy in Northern Ireland was aimed at stopping the violence and bringing a peaceful resolution based on a power-sharing government, whilst involving the Republic of Ireland. To achieve these objectives, British governments devised two parallel strategic policies; a security strategy that included deployment of police and military forces as well as use of special legal powers, and a political patronage for negotiating ceasefires, interim accords and comprehensive peace agreements. In principle these were two separate policies, but in reality security and politics were inextricably linked and were applied simultaneously by both Labour and Conservative governments. This dual policy is best described by Michael Ancram, former Minister of State for Northern Ireland in the mid 1990s,

⁵¹⁸ Bruce, "Turf War and Peace: Loyalist Paramilitaries since 1994", p. 518

⁵¹⁹ Bruce, "Northern Ireland: Reappraising Loyalist Violence", p. 125

arguing that a state 'can talk to insurgents and their supporters even when taking military sanctions against them.'⁵²⁰

Despite the diverse political views of different governments, the British leadership was conscious of the level of violence and attentive to the demands and positions of the public, and interchangeably put more emphasis either on security measures or political pressure. Wavering between security and politics proved to be a significant policy instrument that ultimately contributed to the UVF's (and the IRA's) decision to accept a peaceful resolution and accommodate lawful political activity.

In addition to security and politics, the British efforts to address the economic and social roots of the conflict should not be discounted. Successive British governments worked to compensate for years of discrimination against the Catholics in welfare, employment and housing through political initiatives and legislation. These efforts had a significant effect in bringing the two rival communities to accept the Good Friday Agreement, and as Peter Hain, former Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, stated: 'It would be hard to overestimate the importance of these social and economic factors, and any discussion on the resolution of conflict in Northern Ireland which ignored them would be worthless.'⁵²¹

THE BRITISH SECURITY POLICY – A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH

From the outset, the *raison d'être* for the British direct involvement in Northern Ireland was based on the security needs of the local citizens. Officially, the primary objective of Britain's security policy, as outlined in June 1977 by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, was to:

⁵²⁰ Ancram, Michael. "It is time to start dancing with the wolves", *The Independent*, 24 August 2006; <http://comment.independent.co.uk/commentators/article1221272.ece> (accessed 3/5/08)

⁵²¹ Speech by Peter Hain MP at Chatham House, London, UK, 12/6/2007

Free Northern Ireland from terrorism in all its forms and to do so in such a way as to ensure as far as possible that it will not break out again in future years...to eradicate terrorism so that it will have no chance of revival.⁵²²

With this determination, the British Labour government led by Harold Wilson responded positively to Stormont's appeal for assistance in dealing with the Troubles. In August 1969, military forces were sent to Belfast to prevent further escalation of violence and civil unrest. Since the local (predominantly Protestant) police forces 'were proving incapable of containing, without exacerbating, the worsening situation,' the role of the security forces was to defend the law-abiding citizens of all denominations and tackle any form of violence, be it Protestant or Catholic.⁵²³

Initially, the soldiers were welcomed by the Catholics, who felt defenceless against the Protestant onslaught. Yet, as IRA attacks increased dramatically, the army concentrated on safeguarding the Protestants and preserving their constitutional and ethnic union with the British mainland. Accordingly, in the eyes of the security services, the republican IRA was specifically perceived as the primary threat and responsible for fuelling the conflict. More generally, the Catholics were subjected to harsher security policies and largely regarded as a rebellious community that wished to promote the establishment of a unified Republic of Ireland.⁵²⁴

At the beginning of the Troubles, the idea of Protestant hostility towards the Crown was unthinkable, particularly because of the shared history and the allegiance of Ulster citizens to Britain. In Protestant eyes, the marching of the British army into the streets of Belfast was 'a symbol of Westminster's commitment to their cause.'⁵²⁵ However, the initial British low-profile security policy in Northern Ireland, in an attempt not to alienate the entire Catholic

⁵²² Address by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Roy Mason, at the House of Commons CJ 4/1654, 2879/IB/77, 8.6.1977

⁵²³ Bruce, *The Red Hand*, p. 215

⁵²⁴ Ruane and Todd, pp. 128-131

⁵²⁵ Kennedy-Pipe, Caroline. *The Origins of the Present Troubles in Northern Ireland* (Harlow: Addison Wesley Longman Ltd., 1997), p. 73

population, was interpreted by working-class Protestants as lack of aggression and determination against the IRA. Consequently, there was a danger that growing frustration among Protestants might lead them to violence, should the government appear inept.⁵²⁶ Undoubtedly, the UVF benefited from the British restrained strategy and enjoyed an upsurge of new loyalist recruits and public support. Soon UVF violence became a popular and effective method to assuage Protestant fears.

Within the Protestant community, the UVF was, undoubtedly, the most violent manifestation of the opposition to the nationalist ideology that threatened to undermine the British efforts to restore order in Northern Ireland. However, a 1977 confidential memorandum reveals that the British government miscalculated its strength:

The UVF is a comparatively small organisation with tight security, currently believed to be responsible for the majority of sectarian attacks. They are reasonably well organised as a military force but their effectiveness has been somewhat dubious.⁵²⁷

Indeed at that time, mainly due to British military pressure and internal disorder, UVF members were less effective and somewhat disorganised, yet 'their potential killing power was phenomenal.'⁵²⁸ The British attempts in the early 1970s to improve public safety in Northern Ireland were overshadowed by random shootings and frequent bombings. Soon even the loyalty of Ulster Protestants to Britain did not prevent them 'from determined opposition to particular actions of political representatives of the same crown and flag.'⁵²⁹ Naturally, as the political chaos in Northern Ireland deepened, the UVF gained more power and in the existing security vacuum it felt obligated to defend the Protestants even at the risk of clashing with the British security forces.

⁵²⁶ McGrattan, Cillian. *Northern Ireland: 1968-2008* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp. 34-57

⁵²⁷ CJ 4/1919, Ref. No. 82, 26.4.1977

⁵²⁸ Sinnerton, p. 37

⁵²⁹ McAuley, p. 524

Facing a complicated situation in which a liberal democracy was forced to fight its own citizens who were involved in violence, Britain had to adopt a unique set of security and legal measures that would enable it to maintain stability and the rule of law. The British government was well-aware that accepting highly controversial methods would infringe some basic human and civil rights, but given the impossible and dangerous reality of Northern Ireland in the 1970s this seemed like a necessary evil. To that end, emergency provisions were 'designed to provide security forces with the necessary powers to prevent and disrupt terrorist activity.'⁵³⁰ Evidently, the main target for these draconian measures was the IRA but also the Catholic community that supported it and its republican ideology. Yet, as Protestant violence increased none of the loyalist terrorist organisations, and the UVF first amongst them, was immune to the controversial British tactics.

Britain's policy against loyalist and republican terrorist organisations in Northern Ireland was implemented through three security-cycles: the local police force (the RUC), deployment of regular army personnel and Special Forces, and extensive legal powers to complement the overall security effort. These security-cycles were not used simultaneously from the beginning of the Troubles, rather they evolved gradually according to the needs and the severity of the situation. Nonetheless, once they were implemented concurrently, from 1977 onwards, they had a remarkably positive effect on the security climate in Northern Ireland.⁵³¹ The British security policy not only managed to contain the terrorists but also to attain an acceptable level of violence that the people of Northern Ireland, and the British public, could live with.

The first security-cycle, and one of Britain's key instruments in Northern Ireland, was the local police force that was initially perceived as a body capable of attracting widespread support and seen as an integral part of both the

⁵³⁰ Bamford, Bradley. "The Role and Effectiveness of Intelligence in Northern Ireland", *Intelligence and National Security*, 20:4 (December 2005), p. 584

⁵³¹ From a peak of 479 deaths in 1972, the number plummeted to 111 in 1977 and continued to drop almost consistently. <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/sutton/tables/Year.html> (accessed 1/6/08)

Protestant and Catholic communities. On the ground, however, Britain's handling of the issue of law enforcement was representative of its mistreatment of the ethnic divisions in Northern Ireland that discriminated against the Catholics. More specifically, the Protestants constituted 88% of the total RUC personnel, which explains why the Northern Ireland police force 'failed to inspire confidence and trust in large parts of the population.'⁵³² Also, the senior and mid-level positions of the Northern Ireland civil and judicial services were disproportionately Protestant.⁵³³ Moreover, since the Protestants were mostly seen as allies, the British government agreed to establish exclusively Protestant special armed units, such as the "B Specials", to fight against Catholic subversives and any unlawful activity.⁵³⁴

Expectedly, many UVF men, who previously served in the British army, were inclined to join the local police units, and therefore the loyalist terrorist organisation was regarded by nationalists as 'a cover-name for Stormont's own law and order institutions.'⁵³⁵ Even the Ulster Defence Regiment (UDR), a new locally-recruited militia open to all that was established in 1970 to provide policing support to the RUC, did not convince the Catholics that they will be treated equally.

As in previous cases, entire UVF units joined the UDR and were granted training and access to weapons and intelligence. A confidential British Military Intelligence report written in 1973 (and released in 2004), found evidence that 'members of subversion or extremist groups have deliberately attempted to join their local UDR group on masse,' and concluded that the motives of UVF men who joined the UDR 'were probably to obtain weapons training, and

⁵³² Knox, Colin. "See No Evil, Hear No Evil", *The British Journal of Criminology*, 42:1 (2002), p. 168

⁵³³ Ruane and Todd, p. 140

⁵³⁴ The "B Specials", officially named "the Ulster Special Constabulary", was formed in 1922 as a part-time auxiliary unit within the RUC. The unit was abolished in 1972 and replaced by the UDR.

⁵³⁵ Cusack and McDonald, p. 16

perhaps to place its members in a position where they had access to arms and ammunition.'⁵³⁶

The fact that UVF members, under the auspices of the police force, unofficially enjoyed close relationship with the British security apparatuses, further discouraged Catholics to take part in the defence of Northern Ireland.⁵³⁷ Therefore, UVF men were perceived by many nationalists as 'puppets of imperialism or "death squads" under the command and control of their British masters.'⁵³⁸ In placing Northern Ireland's policing duties in the hands of Protestants, and amongst them many UVF members, Britain effectively ensured that Northern Ireland's security would remain unionist-oriented.

In the early years of the Troubles it was clear that the RUC was no longer capable of subduing the republican and loyalist violence or maintaining order in the province. Moreover, an official report of the British Army admits that the RUC 'was completely overwhelmed by the scale of violence,' and that it was ill-prepared, used unnecessary force and gained a bad reputation.⁵³⁹ The UVF in particular, that was acknowledged in the report as the most dangerous terrorist organisation among loyalist armed organisations, exploited the RUC's favouritism towards the Protestants to run risk-free armed attacks against Catholics.⁵⁴⁰ Soon it was apparent to the British government that the UVF's sectarian attacks became more effective and its operations undermined any possibility for a peaceful resolution. Subsequently, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Roy Mason, made sure that local policemen received more training and better equipment and were allowed to use harsh interrogation techniques. The impact was dramatic and the RUC 'had recovered its operational effectiveness,' and had taken the lead in security operations in the

⁵³⁶ "Subversion in the UDR", British military intelligence report (August 1973), Public Records Office, p. 4 (released in 2004)

⁵³⁷ Bruce, *The Red Hand*, p. 216

⁵³⁸ Cusack and McDonald, p. 1

⁵³⁹ "Operation Banner: An Analysis of Military Operations in Northern Ireland", a report prepared under the direction of the Chief of the General Staff (Ministry of Defence: Army Code 71842), July 2006, p. 2-3

⁵⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 3-3

province by the end of the 1970s.⁵⁴¹ Moreover, the RUC received support from the UDR and intelligence from the army, and was able to execute raids on several UVF centres and arrest many operatives, which led to reports that by the early 1980s in certain areas in Northern Ireland, the UVF was 'practically non-existent.'⁵⁴²

Despite the efforts, the police alone could not achieve substantial results against the terrorists. Therefore, the British government decided to deploy the army heavily in Northern Ireland to support the RUC; thus forming the second security-cycle. The 38-year long British military presence in the province, code-named "Operation Banner", was intended initially to cope with the widespread public disorder, and later to bring terrorism to an end. At the height of the campaign 28,000 soldiers were stationed in the province, and well over 250,000 soldiers served in Northern Ireland between 1969 and 2007.⁵⁴³ An official report concluded that the army's overall performance against irregular organisations in Northern Ireland was successful using 'a high-quality, robust and professional force which was able to adapt and evolve rapidly.'⁵⁴⁴

However, success cost dearly and 697 British servicemen were killed by loyalist and republican terrorists.⁵⁴⁵ To reinforce the military campaign, Secretary Mason, dubbed by Gusty Spence as a 'little dictator,' decided to deploy the elite Special Air Service (SAS) into Northern Ireland; action that significantly diminished the operational capability of the local terrorist organisations.⁵⁴⁶ During a Parliament session in 1977, Mason declared that the:

Army will be concentrating on increased SAS-type activity and more specialist troops trained in anti-terrorist activity will be

⁵⁴¹ Ibid, p. 2-13

⁵⁴² Cusack and McDonald, p. 169

⁵⁴³ "Operation Banner: An Analysis of Military Operations in Northern Ireland", p. 1-2

⁵⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 8-11

⁵⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 2-12

⁵⁴⁶ Garland, p. 197

coming to Northern Ireland in the immediate future. They will be specially trained in covert activity.⁵⁴⁷

Apart from the military value that stemmed from the deployment of the SAS, it mainly demonstrated the British government motivation to apply a hard-line approach towards all the terrorist organisations in the province.⁵⁴⁸

Secretary Mason, who was known for his unwavering stance in cracking down on loyalist violence, and specifically the UVF's, symbolised the British security policy that refused to openly declare a "state of emergency" or "war" and insisted on treating terrorists from both sides as common criminals rather than politically-motivated individuals. Christopher Andrew concluded that during Mason's term as Secretary of State, the security services main counter-terrorism achievements were against the loyalist terrorist organisations.⁵⁴⁹ Furthermore, Secretary Mason gave the RUC the lead role in combating terrorism but made sure that it 'will continue to be buttressed by the army, which will remain deployed in whatever strength is needed.'⁵⁵⁰ Although he reduced the number of regular soldiers in Northern Ireland, Mason put greater emphasis on pin-point operations and granted more powers to the army and police. Clearly, Mason's security reforms and tough military policy led to the decline in the death toll as a result of UVF attacks; from 1977 onwards, the annual number of victims fell from 60 to 2, and the number of UVF men serving time in prison increased considerably.⁵⁵¹

The success of the security policy could not have been achieved without complementary judicial powers. This third security-cycle enabled the Crown courts to prosecute and convict terrorists, using internment without trial, trials without a jury, harsh interrogation techniques, and increased penalties for membership in terrorist organisations. These extensive legal measures inspired

⁵⁴⁷ CJ 4/1654, 2879/IB/77, 8.6.1977

⁵⁴⁸ Aolain, Fionnuala. *The Politics of Force: Conflict Management and State Violence in Northern Ireland* (Belfast: The Blackstaff Press, 2000), p. 77

⁵⁴⁹ Andrew, p. 653

⁵⁵⁰ CJ 4/1654, 2879/IB/77, 8.6.77

⁵⁵¹ <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/sutton/crosstabs.html> (accessed 27/5/2008)

a public outcry and to some extent even fuelled the conflict, yet when combined with aggressive military strategy they contributed greatly to the containment of violence. Cusack and McDonald note that the emergency powers given to the police and the army did not stop the UVFs killings, but they 'severely reduced their ability to cause mayhem...emasculated the UVF's capability to wage war...[and] indeed the number of murders and attempted murders decreased dramatically.'⁵⁵²

One particular measure, commonly known as the Supergrass system, is often underestimated but proved to be very effective in decimating the ranks of both republican and loyalist terrorist organisations and reducing sectarian attacks.⁵⁵³ Nonetheless, it was highly controversial in terms of infringing judicial rights that 'did considerable damage to the criminal justice system in Northern Ireland.'⁵⁵⁴ This measure was part of a comprehensive 'security strategy to remove in a systematic way suspected terrorists from circulation in the community.'⁵⁵⁵ The Supergrass system enabled the police and Crown prosecution to arrest and convict terrorists based on uncorroborated evidence 'provided by persons who had been actively involved in political violence themselves and who had agreed to give evidence for the prosecution against others involved in similar activities,' in return for immunity, clemency or reduced prison sentences, and even a new identity.⁵⁵⁶

At its peak in the 1980s, the use of Supergrass informers certainly damaged the UVF's operational capability. A significant outcome was the increased number of UVF informers who struck a deal with the RUC to implicate their friends, by providing the security forces with valuable intelligence that put a face and address on many of the UVF's top men and covert cells. As a result, hundreds of UVF members were arrested or

⁵⁵² Cusack and McDonald, p. 232-234

⁵⁵³ Bamford, pp. 594-595

⁵⁵⁴ Kennedy-Pipe, p. 115

⁵⁵⁵ Bonner, David. "Combating Terrorism: Supergrass Trials in Northern Ireland", *Modern Law Review*, Vol. 51 (1988), p. 23

⁵⁵⁶ Hillyard, Paddy and Percy-Smith, Janie. "Converting Terrorists: The Use of Supergrasses in Northern Ireland", *Journal of Law and Society*, 11:3 (Winter 1984), p. 335

imprisoned, enormous funds were diverted from arms purchases to support them and their families while in jail, and the leadership structure was in total disarray. According to Andrew, the UVF did not recover from the long prison sentences passed on some of its leaders, and its operations were limited to 'attempts, frequently unsuccessful, to smuggle arms and explosives to Northern Ireland.'⁵⁵⁷

A serious issue that should be addressed when analysing the British security policy in Northern Ireland, is the Catholic accusation that the UVF was a proxy of the police and army and regarded it as 'the security services off-duty', suggesting that the UVF was controlled by Britain.⁵⁵⁸ Certainly, the UVF's operational capability was damaged by the British security policy. Yet the close (sometimes overlapping) links between Protestants and British security personnel led to claims that the UVF was formally (attacks sanctioned with directives from operational and political levels of government) and informally (individual servicemen assisted UVF terrorists in their attacks without official approval) colluding with the British forces.⁵⁵⁹ Consequently, Catholic allegations often suggested that the security services provided the UVF with weapons and intelligence on IRA members and targets and even carried out joint operations.

Naturally, the UVF did not want to be portrayed as a "puppet" of the British establishment but rather as an authentic and independent local reaction to republican violence. In an attempt to dismiss any possibility of collaboration with the British security forces, the UVF declared in 1994 that 'the idea that the politicians and policemen were directing us was absurd...if we had top-level information on republican targets from the police there would have been countless more republicans buried up.'⁵⁶⁰ Bruce supports this argument and explains that only a small number of soldiers and policemen actively aided the

⁵⁵⁷ Andrew, p. 684

⁵⁵⁸ Bruce, *The Red Hand*, p. 200

⁵⁵⁹ Cochrane, Mark. "Security Forces Collusion in Northern Ireland 1969-1999: Substance or Symbolism?", *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* (36:1, 2013), p. 77

⁵⁶⁰ McDonald, p. 96

UVF or provided weapons and information, and that 'despite sharing a common enemy, recruiting from the same population, and living in the same areas, the security forces and the paramilitaries have not enjoyed a cosy relationship.'⁵⁶¹

After the explosion of the four car bombs in Dublin and Monaghan, people in Northern Ireland expressed even more scepticism of the UVF's ability to perform such a complicated operation on its own. Rumours even suggested that the British intelligence was either directly involved or supplied the explosives. In response to the allegations, a UVF senior commander said that it 'read like something from *The X Files*.'⁵⁶² Ultimately, in the 1993 statement, in which the UVF took sole responsibility for the attack, it also denied any allegations of colluding with British security services:

The UVF avails itself of this opportunity to state clearly and without reservation that the entire operation was from its conception to its successful conclusion, planned and carried out by our volunteers aided by no outside bodies... The type of explosives, timing and detonating methods all bore the hallmark of the UVF.⁵⁶³

In 2007 an official Commission of Investigation into The Dublin and Monaghan bombings of 1974 was ordered by the government of Ireland. The commission, led by Patrick McEntee, concluded in its final report that it found no evidence of collusion between the UVF and British security services.⁵⁶⁴ Although both the UVF and British authorities went to great lengths to dispel any claims of collaboration, there is no doubt that there was some level of social and operational interaction between the security forces and loyalists. Evidently, there have been soldiers and policemen who were sympathetic to the loyalist view or even helped UVF terrorists in one way or another. James McAuley points out that 'there is little question that some selective assassinations by

⁵⁶¹ Bruce, *The Red Hand*, p. 225

⁵⁶² Ibid, p. 245

⁵⁶³ <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/othelem/organ/uvf/uvf150793.htm> (Accessed 13/2/2008)

⁵⁶⁴ McEntee, Partick. "Commission of Investigation into The Dublin and Monaghan Bombings of 1974", Final Report (March 2007), pp. 109-111

loyalist paramilitaries were encouraged and assisted by the state.'⁵⁶⁵ Cusack and McDonald concur that there was collaboration between the British security services and the UVF, yet they reject the claim that it was institutionally-based. They note that if this was the case, 'then it would be impossible to explain why, by the end of the Troubles, there were more loyalists than republicans serving life imprisonment in the Maze prison.'⁵⁶⁶

In reality, an absolute majority of regular army soldiers, as opposed to the locally-recruited RUC and UDR, served short tours-of-duty in Northern Ireland and were less involved in the community life. In fact, they showed 'ambivalence towards Protestants...and considerable initial sympathy with the Catholic minority.'⁵⁶⁷ Therefore, the army treated Protestants and Catholics equally by applying the same military and legal measures towards both communities regardless of the servicemen private views. Furthermore, because of the popularity of the alleged collusion, the British government was even more adamant in dispersing the Catholic sentiment of discrimination in the security policy. Under various special powers granted to the security services by the British government and the Crown courts, UVF members were hunted, detained, interrogated and convicted, as relentlessly as republicans. This even-handed policy was described in a 1979 classified briefing paper that was sent to the Prime Minister by a senior official at 10 Downing Street pointing out that:

The police draws no distinction between Catholics and Protestants in the investigation of security offences and the prosecution of such offenders...In searching for arms and explosives, the security forces are acting vigorously against both Catholic and Protestant areas.⁵⁶⁸

Addressing the increasing role of the UVF in the terrorist attacks, the paper noted that 'the growth of Protestant violence represents a very serious change in the security situation. The shooting and other attacks on the Army in

⁵⁶⁵ McAuley, p. 526

⁵⁶⁶ Cusack and McDonald, p. 403

⁵⁶⁷ Bruce, *The Red Hand*, p. 222

⁵⁶⁸ FCO 87/81, WLU 1/25, 18.10.79

Protestant areas...had nothing to do with the IRA or with incidents engineered by them.' It concluded by urging the prime minister to promise Catholic leaders that 'the security forces will continue to confront with the utmost determination and with complete impartiality all those who seek to disrupt the community by violence, whether be Protestant or Catholic.'⁵⁶⁹

Despite the British attempt to treat loyalists and republicans equally, allegations of collusion between the British security forces and loyalist paramilitaries in Northern Ireland still continued. Throughout the years, British governments commissioned several enquiries and reports to investigate these allegations. Such an official inquiry, conducted by Sir John Stevens, Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, concluded in 2003 that members of the British security services colluded with Loyalist terrorist organisations in Northern Ireland to murder Catholics. Stevens determined that collusion ranged from the 'wilful failure to keep records, the absence of accountability, the withholding of intelligence and evidence, through to the extreme of agents being involved in murder.' He specifically highlighted that the 'unlawful involvement of agents in murder implied that the security forces sanctioned killings.'⁵⁷⁰

Another review, ordered by the House of Commons and published in December 2012, which was led by Sir Desmond de Silva, a prominent British lawyer, concluded that a covert agent-running unit of the British Army, known as The Force Research Unit (FRU), was 'passing significant and exploitable intelligence to the RUC,' that was provided by recruited agents within the Loyalist terrorist organisations.⁵⁷¹ Based on his comprehensive research, de Silva further determined that the:

Scale and seriousness of the collusion between some members of the security forces and loyalist paramilitaries should have

⁵⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁷⁰ "Stevens Enquiry: Overview & Recommendations" by Sir John Stevens, 17th April 2003, p. 16

⁵⁷¹ "The Report of the Patrick Finucane Review" by the Rt Hon Sir Desmond de Silva QC, December 2012, p. 201

necessitated urgent and rigorous action on the part of the authorities to pursue those responsible.⁵⁷²

In retrospect, for the most part, the British unyielding attempt to fight loyalist violence as stringently as republican terrorism was successful in improving personal security in Northern Ireland. It also greatly influenced the local public opinion that opposed violence, particularly when communal life became vibrant again by the end of the 1970s. Specifically, the notion that the British government acted more decisively to crush loyalist and republican violence had considerable impact on Protestants. While fewer thought violence was still necessary, even those who remained committed to the armed campaign believed that violence could no longer be justified. Bruce mentions one UVF member who admitted in the late 1980s that 'there was no need for us then...I said we should grease our guns and put them under the floorboards and send a big cheque to the RUC benevolent fund and let them go with it.'⁵⁷³

THE BRITISH POLITICAL DIMENSION – CREATIVITY AND COMPROMISE

Although Britain was responsible for governing Northern Ireland, its political role was mainly to arbitrate between two warring communities hoping that it would eventually create the conditions for resolving the conflict through compromise.⁵⁷⁴ In analysing the UVF's transition to politics, one cannot overlook Britain's determination and creative thinking in bringing the conflict to a negotiated settlement. Charles Townsend supports this assertion when writing that 'it is doubtful whether any party to the Northern Ireland conflict has shown such a desire as the British government to reach a settlement.'⁵⁷⁵

At times of military stalemate, Britain's political initiatives helped to reducing the levels of violence. By no means was this an easy task; Labour and

⁵⁷² Ibid, p. 261

⁵⁷³ Bruce, *The Red Hand*, p. 136

⁵⁷⁴ Kennedy-Pipe, Caroline. "From war to uneasy peace in Northern Ireland", in Cox, Michael, et.al (eds.) *A Farewell to Arms? Beyond the Good Friday Agreement* (Manchester:Manchester University Press, 2006), p. 47

⁵⁷⁵ Cited in Ruane and Todd, p. 223-224

Conservative governments knew that a 'peace process has to resolve much more than the Troubles...it has to address the whole legacy of history and the many unresolved problems inherited from the past.'⁵⁷⁶ Nonetheless, every British premier since 1969 took it upon himself to facilitate a dialogue between Protestants and Catholics, and insisted that the Republic of Ireland must play a role in the process. In return for a possible cessation of violence, Britain provided solid political support and offered social assurances and economic incentives to encourage all parties to reach agreements. Ultimately, the rival parties managed to take advantage of one another's exhaustion of violence as well as willingness to compromise, and thus were able to successfully resolve the long and bloody conflict.

Britain's direct political involvement in Northern Ireland was somewhat unplanned and the circumstances at the beginning were rather grim. Initially, the British government left the management of Northern Ireland to the local unionist leadership. But when violence escalated dramatically in the early 1970s, with a catalyst such as "Bloody Sunday", Northern Ireland became ungovernable and extreme measures had to be taken. Facing increasing IRA attacks, angry unionists expected London to defend Ulster and demanded tougher security measures. The British Conservative PM, Edward Heath, was determined to restore order in the province by assuming direct responsibility for security. When the unionist premier Brian Faulkner refused, Heath announced in March 1972 the suspension of the Stormont parliament and introduced Direct Rule from London. Subsequently, Faulkner and his cabinet resigned and Heath transferred executive powers to a designated Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, and the province was to be administered through a new governmental department – the Northern Ireland Office.

The starting point of Britain's political responsibility over Northern Ireland could not have been direr. Although Direct Rule was intended to be temporary, it was clear that the decision to 'prorogue Stormont was made in

⁵⁷⁶ Mansergh, p. 24

the absence of a long-term plan.⁵⁷⁷ The introduction of Direct Rule had significant impact on the lives of the people of Northern Ireland. For the Protestants, the abolishment of Stormont represented the failure of traditional unionism and for the first time since 1920 they were no longer in charge of their political destiny. This notion created a trauma within the unionist community, enhanced their feelings of being driven into a united Ireland, and therefore was perceived as the destruction of Protestant supremacy in Northern Ireland. Nationalists, on the other hand, interpreted Direct Rule as another triumph on the road towards a united Ireland, which gave the IRA a boost to step-up its attacks. In response, loyalist terrorist organisations intensified their sectarian attacks against Catholics, and the cycle of violence peaked.

Confronted with two displeased communities and being blamed for the political chaos in Northern Ireland, the British government was forced to find new ways to resolve the conflict. By and large, the British political efforts can be divided into three strategies: the first was formulation of peace initiatives that affected the UVF's strategy and tactics; the second was the use of political exclusion as a "carrot and stick" mechanism to draw radical organisations into peaceful negotiations; and the last one was cooperation with the PUP as an instrument to bring about the UVF's disarmament and demobilisation.

Since the early 1970s the security deterioration in Northern Ireland was a main concern for the British government and its officials were assigned to draw political initiatives to halt terrorist attacks and promote peace. In devising schemes for peaceful resolution, Britain had to be careful not to provoke a loyalist backlash while offering republicans political concessions aimed at persuading them to enter negotiations.⁵⁷⁸ Between 1972 and 1998 British governments presented several peaceful proposals, the most notable were the Sunningdale Agreement, the Anglo-Irish Agreement, and the Good Friday Agreement, which above all others signifies the peaceful end of the Northern

⁵⁷⁷ McGrattan, pp. 58-59

⁵⁷⁸ Tonge, Jonathan. *Northern Ireland: Conflict and Change* (Harlow: Longman, 1998), p. 50

Ireland conflict. These proposals had utmost importance in gradually convincing the opposing communities not only to talk to each other but to address the grievances and recognise the legitimacy of some of the claims on each side. The British determinacy to provide the armed organisations an honourable way out of the conflict was pivotal to the success of its political strategy.⁵⁷⁹

The UVF's transition from violence to politics could not have materialised without the above mentioned peace initiatives and other engagements, that began in the early 1970s and laid the foundations for the current political order in Northern Ireland. According to Dixon, the initial British strategy was to 'construct a moderate power-sharing executive of nationalists and unionists which could devolve power back to Northern Ireland.'⁵⁸⁰ Accordingly, the first workable plan, known as the Sunningdale Agreement, was launched in December 1973. It was aimed at establishing a new government in Northern Ireland 'in which nationalists and unionists would share power within a wider political framework involving the Irish Republic.'⁵⁸¹ More specifically, the agreement was intended to put an end to the Protestant political dominance and allow a greater role for the Catholics in the future government of Northern Ireland, whilst reassuring the constitutional status of the unionist community. Furthermore, it recognised the direct involvement of the Republic of Ireland in Northern Ireland as vital for any peaceful settlement.⁵⁸²

Despite its promising approach, the Sunningdale Agreement brought neither an end to loyalist or republican terrorism or long-term stability. The main reason for its failure was the exclusion of the radical elements in both camps that strongly believed that 'what British governments thought was best

⁵⁷⁹ Dixon, Paul. "Political Skills or Lying and Manipulation? The Choreography of the Northern Ireland Peace Process", *Political Studies*, 50:4 (2002), pp. 725-741

⁵⁸⁰ Dixon, Paul. "Paths to peace in Northern Ireland (II): The peace processes 1973-74 and 1996-94", *Democratization*, 4:3, (September 1997), p. 1

⁵⁸¹ Taylor, p. 119

⁵⁸² A full text of the Agreement can be viewed at:

<http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/events/sunningdale/agreement.htm> (accessed 14/2/2008)

for Northern Ireland was seldom viewed in that light by most of its citizens.'⁵⁸³ Ulster loyalists believed that it was 'over-balanced against unionism,' and therefore opposed any attempt to form a power-sharing executive.⁵⁸⁴ The republicans, on the other hand, ruled themselves out of any likely peace process claiming that the agreement fell short of their demand of Northern Ireland free of British control. Ultimately, the agreement collapsed due to the unionist determination to bring down a political roadmap that was perceived as an appeasement to republican violence and could potentially lead to Irish unity. An extensive industrial strike of working-class Protestants in May 1974, not only further emphasised the unionist alienation but essentially 'brought the power-sharing executive to its knees.'⁵⁸⁵

Despite the wide unionist opposition to the agreement, the Sunningdale process was the cornerstone for the UVF's future political participation. It must be noted that since its inception the leading loyalist terrorist organisation was more prone to political considerations than other armed groups and was rather unique in its understanding of the power of politics. Bruce points out that the UVF was always aware that a paramilitary organisation 'cannot be a powerful independent political force; such role must be left the politicians.'⁵⁸⁶ Although the UVF publicly opposed the Sunningdale Agreement, it recognised an opportunity to raise its popular standing and strengthen its political consciousness. To give the fragile peace process a chance to develop, the UVF declared a self-imposed ceasefire in November 1973. However, the organisational restraint had another important, and less known, objective – to convey its disenchantment with the way Ulster politicians were handling Northern Ireland's affairs, and to establish itself as a political alternative to the constitutional unionist leadership. This unexpected move was best explained by Billy Mitchell, a senior UVF member and later a PUP politician: 'We felt if we

⁵⁸³ Taylor, p. 127

⁵⁸⁴ Dixon, Paul. "Political Skills or Lying and Manipulation? p. 729

⁵⁸⁵ Dixon, Paul. "Paths to peace in Northern Ireland (II): The peace processes 1973-74 and 1996-94", p. 7

⁵⁸⁶ Bruce, *The Edge of the Union*, p. 100

called a ceasefire and stopped the hostilities, perhaps we could engage politically and maybe even ourselves come up with some political thoughts. We just felt that continued acts of violence weren't taking us anywhere.'⁵⁸⁷

The principles introduced in the Sunningdale Agreement are thought to be ahead of their time, and they served as the basis for every other peace proposal presented after. A newly devised political roadmap, known as the Anglo-Irish Agreement, was described by a British politician as 'Sunningdale plus.'⁵⁸⁸ The agreement signed in November 1985 by British and Irish premiers, was seen as the adequate platform to bring a peaceful settlement. In its main clauses the agreement confirmed Northern Ireland's link to Britain and noted that any change in the constitutional status of the province must be approved by a majority of the population. To galvanise the nationalists to accept the agreement, it also formally reaffirmed Ireland's legitimate right to influence the decision making of Northern Ireland's government and set out the conditions for a devolved government.⁵⁸⁹ Peter Hain, former Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, argued that the agreement 'liberated the nationalists,' as it:

...effectively moved the debate on from the immediate causes of the conflict to the fundamental issue of identity, and the rights of nationalists to have their sense of belonging recognised by both Governments.⁵⁹⁰

Although the agreement was approved by an overwhelming majority in the British and Irish parliaments, it failed to bring the desired peace, security and stability to Northern Ireland and encountered a wide opposition from unionists and nationalists alike. It did, however, improve the working relations and cooperation between the British and Irish governments, a factor that would turn out as crucial in the peace process in the 1990s.

⁵⁸⁷ Taylor, p. 122-123

⁵⁸⁸ Dixon, Paul. "Paths to peace in Northern Ireland (II): The peace processes 1973-74 and 1996-94", p. 12

⁵⁸⁹ A full text of the Agreement can be viewed at: <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/events/aia/aiadoc.htm> (accessed 27/5/2008)

⁵⁹⁰ Speech by Peter Hain MP at Chatham House, London, UK, 12/6/2007

The Anglo-Irish Agreement was received by the UVF with ambivalence. On one hand, it did not want to undermine the peace process, particularly after many members had already been indoctrinated and prepared for a political compromise.⁵⁹¹ On the other, UVF leadership felt obliged to oppose any possibility that would bring Britain's political and military withdrawal from Northern Ireland. Ultimately, the alleged triumph of nationalism set the tone for the UVF and it was met with a new wave of loyalist violence. Yet, this time the potential targets were the new institutions set up under the accords as well as security personnel and civil servants responsible for implementing the agreement. A UVF warning stating that 'if you are not for us then you are against us,' signalled a watershed in UVF-security forces relations.⁵⁹² The armed opposition led to unavoidable clashes between the UVF and the RUC and resulted in casualties on both sides. However, the UVF's attacks against official government representatives were counter-productive and immediately resulted in further decline in the organisation's public support among working-class Protestants.

In effect, UVF attacks against security and civilian personnel marked the beginning of the end for its activity as an armed terrorist organisation. Scenes of UVF attacks on police and military targets were broadcast in the media and estranged many in the Protestant community. If one can argue that until the summer of 1986 law-abiding Protestants "accepted" violence as a necessity, when violence was purposely targeting state representatives it was roundly condemned and largely seen as intolerable. Also, under the leadership of the Conservative Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, who was committed to battle the IRA as well as loyalist violence, Protestants felt more secure and the UVF's justifications for its armed campaign became less relevant.⁵⁹³

By the end of the 1980s, the UVF's standing among Protestants was at an all time low, and therefore had no other choice but to re-think the existence and

⁵⁹¹ Sinnerton, p. 115-118

⁵⁹² Cusack and McDonald, p. 239

⁵⁹³ Taylor, pp. 178-183

future course of the organisation. Cusack and McDonald stress that the internal deliberations resulted in a growing realisation 'that no one would win the war...[and] that a cessation of violence was inevitable.'⁵⁹⁴ The understanding that the armed campaign reached a military stalemate together with the changes in the political landscape, set the background that eventually produced the ceasefires in the 1990s. Gusty Spence, who was instrumental in advocating the use of non-violent methods, established himself as the leading force behind the move towards peace:

I had attempted to persuade and use whatever influence I had with the UVF hierarchy to call a ceasefire, at least for a limited period but hopefully for a longer period in order to get some political dialogue going.⁵⁹⁵

His efforts were fruitful and by the early 1990s the UVF was looking for a political direction and its leadership decided to coordinate its actions with the PUP and to use the party's political credentials to capitalise its public stature. The interdependency between the two organisations led to an understanding that if the UVF's violence continues it could not only lead to a collapse of the PUP but is also detrimental to the Protestant cause and brings suffering to the entire community.⁵⁹⁶

The loyalist political analysis that no good could come out of violence, led to the formation of a united front, known as the Combined Loyalist Military Command, in which the UVF had a prominent role. The CLMC's focus was political activity and the drafting of a coherent manifesto to replace what they perceived as the uselessness of the unionist politicians.⁵⁹⁷ Soon after its foundation, the CLMC issued its first ceasefire statement on 22 April 1991:

In the light of impending political dialogue and in common with a sincere and genuine desire to see a peaceful and acceptable solution to our political differences, the Combined Loyalist

⁵⁹⁴ Cusack and McDonald, p. 255

⁵⁹⁵ Taylor, p. 141

⁵⁹⁶ Sinnerton, p. 124-127

⁵⁹⁷ Taylor, p. 216

Military Command shall order a universal suspension of aggressive operational hostilities.⁵⁹⁸

The unilateral ceasefire characterised a period that lasted until 1994, during which the peace process gradually became more dominant than violence in Northern Ireland. The notion that 'governments sooner or later end up talking to those they had regarded as terrorists,' encouraged the British government to seek alternative ways to reach a political settlement.⁵⁹⁹ The fact that ordinary citizens and terrorists on both sides were now ready to accept any compromise that would end the standstill further motivated the British government.

The next step was a joint statement issued in December 1993 by British and Irish premiers, known as the "Downing Street Declaration". The statement carefully outlined the principles for peace in which "self-determination" and "consent" were central components.⁶⁰⁰ It seemed that both loyalists and republicans could not stay indifferent to these principles, particularly when faced with the public's demand for a cessation of violence.

After UVF concerns that Prime Minister John Major struck a secret deal with the IRA before announcing the Downing Street Declaration were abated, it was believed that the obstacle for peace was removed and 'the stage seemed set for the final stretch of the road to peace.'⁶⁰¹ The IRA responded in August 1994 with a general ceasefire that, to a large extent, caught the UVF by surprise. At first, loyalists suspected that they had been betrayed by the British government, but quickly the streets of Belfast were filled with slogans celebrating the IRA's surrender. When loyalist enthusiasm subsided the UVF realised that it remained the main party that was still officially committed to violence at a time when the people of Northern Ireland were attempting to resolve their conflict peacefully. In order to survive as a meaningful actor in the

⁵⁹⁸ Cusack and McDonald, p. 275

⁵⁹⁹ Mansergh, p. 33

⁶⁰⁰ A full text of the declaration can be viewed at:
<http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/events/peace/docs/dsd151293.htm> (accessed 27/5/2008)

⁶⁰¹ Taylor, p. 226

province's political power-struggle, the UVF was compelled to respond with its own ceasefire six weeks later.⁶⁰²

Although the road for peace still had a long way to go, it seemed that the process was on the right track. After receiving assurances from the British government that the "Union was safe", Gusty Spence, the man who saw the Troubles as they began, read a statement saying that the UVF, and other loyalist paramilitaries, would universally cease its hostile operations for as long as the republicans kept their own ceasefire. Spence concluded the statement with a message of hope that the conflict could end without further violence: 'Let us firmly resolve to respect our differing views of freedom, culture and aspiration and never again permit our political circumstances to degenerate into bloody warfare.'⁶⁰³

However, the euphoric atmosphere did not last long as the 'optimism and enthusiasm began to drain away.'⁶⁰⁴ Since the inclusion of Sinn Féin in the peace process was delayed, in February 1996 the IRA detonated a massive bomb in Canary Wharf, and the republican ceasefire was officially over. Loyal to their new mission to support the peace process, instead of calling for retaliatory attacks, UVF leaders appealed to their constituency not to strike back and warned that a return to violence would discredit their effort to reach a political settlement. Dawn Purvis points out that the PUP was involved in an intensive dialogue with the UVF and was able to deliver a clear message that retaliation would scupper the peace talks when people were really looking forward to this. She emphasised that by demonstrating self-restraint, the UVF took the high moral ground and proved its commitment for negotiations for the benefit of the country and the Protestant people.⁶⁰⁵ Indeed, the UVF refrained from reprisals and teams who decided to take unwarranted revenge were disbanded and the

⁶⁰² Sinnerton, pp. 163-168

⁶⁰³ A full text of the ceasefire statement can be viewed at:
<http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/events/peace/docs/clmc131094.htm> (accessed 28/5/2008)

⁶⁰⁴ Mansergh, p. 38

⁶⁰⁵ Interview with Dawn Purvis

men expelled from the organisation.⁶⁰⁶ Overall, it was the UVF's finest hour – it demonstrated an impressive ability to exert control over its operatives and despite occasional clashes with Catholics and intensifying internal loyalist feuds, the UVF's ceasefire held and the organisation remained committed to peace.

The breakdown of the republican ceasefire did not discourage Britain's efforts and determination to reach a political compromise. Indeed, it took another change of government in London to resolve the Northern Ireland conflict. The landslide victory of a new Labour administration, led by Tony Blair, in the May 1997 general election put the peace process back on track.

In its electoral manifesto, the Labour Party promised to revive the peace process based on all-party negotiations, this time including the Sinn Féin as the representative of republican Catholics. Two months later the IRA responded with its second major ceasefire and subsequently the Sinn Féin was officially invited to join the peace talks. According to Taylor, Blair was free from 'parliamentary arithmetic' that had so restricted his predecessor.⁶⁰⁷ This allowed him to devise three objectives that guided his approach for dealing with Northern Ireland: creating a space without violence to allow politics to flourish, identifying courageous individuals that could lead their communities and searching for a political framework that could lead to a compromise.⁶⁰⁸

In accordance with his statements and roadmap for peace, Blair publicly promised the unionists that they had nothing to fear from his new government, and that 'Northern Ireland is safe in the hands of this Government.'⁶⁰⁹ At the same time he demonstrated his genuine willingness to invigorate the dialogue by gesturing to the rejectionist parties. To show his desire to bring also the

⁶⁰⁶ Due to the UVF's commitment to the ceasefire, Billy Wright left to establish its own splinter terrorist organisation, the Loyalist Volunteer Force (LVF).

⁶⁰⁷ Taylor, p. 243

⁶⁰⁸ Speech by Peter Hain MP at Chatham House, London, UK, 12/6/2007

⁶⁰⁹ Tony Blair's speech in Belfast on 16 May 1997, his first official visit outside of London since becoming prime minister; <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/events/peace/docs/tb16597.htm> (accessed: 13/5/2010)

republicans into the inclusive negotiations, he agreed to meet Gerry Adams, leader of Sinn Féin, in Belfast (the first meeting between a British premier and a Sinn Féin leader since 1921). After their meeting Blair told the media: 'We can continue with the hatred and the despair and the killing, treating people as if they were not parts of humanity, or we can try and settle our disagreements by negotiation, by discussion, by debate.'⁶¹⁰ To further emphasise the fruits of peace, Blair invited Adams for another meeting, this time at 10 Downing Street, signaling both domestically and internationally that Sinn Féin had become an acceptable player in the political corridors of British and Irish administrations, under the condition that violence would no longer be a valid strategy.

The peace talks, chaired by US Senator George Mitchell operating under the umbrella of the British and Irish prime ministers, ultimately culminated in the all-party Good Friday Agreement. The agreement, which was signed in April 1998, not only provided a balance between unionist and nationalist interests to make peace possible but also 'signalled a profound transformation in the politics of Northern Ireland. The stagnation that had long paralysed the region was broken up.'⁶¹¹ The agreement, despite the setbacks that occurred during its implementation, gave the peoples of Northern Ireland, Britain and the Republic of Ireland, real hope of ending the conflict as well as tools to resolve any future disagreements peacefully.

However, none of the central milestones in the agreement (a) the constitutional status of the province could only be changed by a majority vote of the citizens, (b) national assembly with devolved legislative powers and a power-sharing executive, and (c) appointment of a North-South Ministerial Council to promote cross-border cooperation, were innovative in essence and appeared in almost all previous initiatives. What made this agreement different from all others was its premeditated objective 'to bring paramilitaries out of

⁶¹⁰ Lyall, Sarah, "Blair Meets With Adams, I.R.A. Figure, In Belfast", *New York Times*, 14 October 1997

<http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9A04E0D81F3CF937A25753C1A961958260&scp=1&sq=gerry+adams,+tony+blair&st=nyt> (accessed 24/5/08)

⁶¹¹ Kennedy-Pipe, "From war to uneasy peace in Northern Ireland", p. 41

violence by bringing them into the political system of the province.'⁶¹² All the parties who signed the agreement, including the Sinn Fein, the PUP and the Ulster Democratic Party (the political party that was associated with the UDA), agreed to the clause reaffirming their 'total and absolute commitment to exclusively democratic and peaceful means of resolving differences on political issues, and our opposition to any use or threat of force by others for any political purpose.'⁶¹³ Although the notions of democracy, consent and non-violence were not new, it seemed that due to the institutional changes, the political developments, the personal and intensive involvement of Tony Blair and Bill Clinton and the wide international attention, this time the parties were truly committed to honour their signature.

The British persistence in initiating creative formulas to bring a peaceful end to the Northern Ireland conflict is commendable, especially when having to deal with powerful forces that rejected the peace process and threatened to derail it. Nonetheless, at times when peace seemed a remote possibility, the British government was ready to use controversial measures such as political exclusion through legal proscription that was aimed at preventing a person, a movement or organisation from taking an active part in constitutional political systems.⁶¹⁴ The objective of the British action was to pressure terrorists by limiting both their actions and movement, in the hope that it would encourage terrorist organisations to renounce violence and adopt non-violent methods.

When the modern UVF began its violent campaign against Catholics in mid-1966, the automatic response of Prime Minister O'Neill to the public uproar was to execute his authority under the Special Powers Act to proscribe the organisation, legally rendering membership an offence punishable by imprisonment. Addressing the Assembly in Stormont, he announced that 'this

⁶¹² Gallaher, Carolyn. *After the Peace: Loyalist Paramilitaries in Post-Accord Northern Ireland* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), p. 3

⁶¹³ A full text of the Good Friday Agreement can be found in: <http://cain.ulst.ac.uk/events/peace/docs/agreement.htm> (accessed 26/5/08)

⁶¹⁴ Finn, John. "Electoral Regimes and The Proscription Of Anti-democratic Parties", in Rapoport, David and Weinberg, Leonard (eds.), *The Democratic Experience and Political Violence* (London: Frank Cass, 2001), p. 56

organisation now takes its proper place alongside the IRA in the schedule of illegal bodies.'⁶¹⁵ O'Neill's action was in-line with the British government's policy to stand firm against any infringement of law and order: 'I warn those who set their ends before the interest of the community that the Government, acting in the best interests of all, will move against them with rigorous severity.'⁶¹⁶

Political exclusion had a negative effect on UVF men, who were persecuted by the security services and sentenced to long periods in prison under the new provisions. Many of them were looking for an alternative to accomplish their objectives. In that sense, the Sunningdale Agreement was a watershed for the UVF's political awakening. It provided an opportunity to cut a deal with the government that would keep the union safe whilst battling IRA's violence. Indeed, the political seeds that were planted had been translated into an unprecedented offer that received little academic scrutiny. In April 1974, UVF representatives met with the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and proposed to end the organisation's violent activity and assume a legal status:

The Ulster Volunteer Force, Brigade Staff, hereby offer the services of the UVF and its associate units to supplement the Civil and Military Authorities in their endeavours to combat terrorism and anarchy...we would, of course, not expect to be permitted to assume the role of an independent armed militia.⁶¹⁷

Shortly after, in a secret meeting a UVF delegation suggested to NIO officials that the organisation would be disbanded or 'accepted as part of the security forces, armed with licensed firearms and acting under the control of the Army or the RUC.'⁶¹⁸ In return, they demanded that the government would apply tougher measures against the IRA, including deployment of police forces in republican areas, confiscation of weapons and ending political contacts with republican representatives.

⁶¹⁵ Bruce, *The Red Hand*, p. 14

⁶¹⁶ Cusack and McDonald, p. 10

⁶¹⁷ CJ 4/1919, 30.4.74

⁶¹⁸ CJ 4/1919, 6.10.1974

In demonstrating such a rational and pragmatic approach, the UVF acknowledged that it could not be allowed to proceed as an armed organisation if it wished to become part of the constitutional political system. Accepting the UVF's readiness to join the British security services could have paved the road to achieving the highest degree of political integration while neutralising the most radical element in the Protestant camp. Yet, both the UVF and the British government were short-sighted and did not foresee the potential in such a far-reaching offer. The UVF's declared ceasefire led to internal disputes, mainly among people 'who joined to fight republicans rather than talk politics,' and the offer was retracted.⁶¹⁹ The British government on its part could not tolerate a situation in which a loyalist terrorist organisation joining its security forces, since it would have strengthened the nationalist perception that the British army and police are operating at the Protestants' behest.

Despite the rejection, the British government noticed the UVF's increasing interest in politics and viewed it as a fertile ground to accommodate the loyalist terrorist organisation into the peace process. This notion was indicated in a classified NIO document concluding that 'there are people who, although at one time committed to violence, would now like to find a way back to political activity.'⁶²⁰ In an attempt to reach out to the UVF, the British government encountered an obstacle: the political dealings were hindered by the fact that it was a proscribed terrorist organisation – the only loyalist organisation banned by the unionist Prime Minister O'Neill in 1966 (and also by the British government itself in 1973). Thus any cooperation with its members was legally forbidden. In order to encourage political transition, the new Labour government, that took a more reformist approach than the previous Conservative administration, decided in May 1974 to remove the UVF from the list of designated terrorist organisations. A month later, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Merlyn Rees, explained to the House of Commons that the reason for de-proscribing the UVF was 'to encourage genuine political

⁶¹⁹ CJ 4/1919, A19, Fortnight, Vol. 6

⁶²⁰ CJ 4/643, 17.6.74

activity' in an anticipation that many of its members and supporters would follow a constructive political path rather than violence.⁶²¹

Lifting of the ban in an attempt to facilitate negotiation enabled the UVF to establish in June 1974 its first lawful movement, the Volunteer Political Party (VPP).⁶²² The new party was founded by members 'who thought the UVF should be doing something positive to complement its terrorism,' after years that it 'had been denied the just right to express openly its political ideology.'⁶²³ Additionally, the formation of a grassroots political party was aimed at giving loyalists a voice to communicate their disappointment and distrust in the incumbent politicians who led Ulster into a decay and anarchy. The UVF used the VPP as an instrument to remove its branding as 'nothing but a bunch of hooded assassins, determined to wreck Ulster by the use of violence.'⁶²⁴ As such, although the VPP still opposed the notion of independence for Northern Ireland, it introduced the UVF's new and moderate outlook that was viewed:

...not simply through the eyes of sectarian bigots and gunmen but through the eyes of enlightened Ulster men...[and] the creation of a new society based upon the unity and sovereignty of the ordinary rank-and-file Ulster people, Protestant and Roman Catholic alike...The people of Ulster must realise that sooner or later they are going to have to live together.⁶²⁵

The talk about Protestants and Catholics living side-by-side represented a radical political change, especially since it came from a terrorist organisation that only a few years earlier contributed to the downfall of a unionist prime minister who was working towards reconciliation with the Catholics.

Despite its promising start, the VPP performed miserably in the 1974 general elections and its single candidate polled only 14% of the unionist vote. A contributing element for the electoral defeat, as explained by Dawn Purvis,

⁶²¹ CJ 4/1919, HOC, 4.11.1975

⁶²² In 1973 the UVF formed the Ulster Loyalist Front intended to fulfill political functions, but the front never became effective.

⁶²³ Bruce, *The Edge of the Union*, p. 99

⁶²⁴ Bruce, *Red Hand*, p. 120

⁶²⁵ *Sunday News*, 3/2/1974

was the branding of the VPP and the UVF by mainstream unionist parties as communists, Marxists and revolutionaries, which may have led unionists to distance themselves from the nascent loyalist party.⁶²⁶ Anthony Richards, however, suggests that the VPP did not have a real chance from the start. First it failed to present a radical and fresh political alternative to the 'stale old unionism.' But even if it did, in his view 'anything innovative was treated with suspicion as a further potential dilution of the Britishness of the province.'⁶²⁷ In any case, the humiliation 'proved to many that the experiment had failed. Worse still, it made the big brave men of the UVF look silly.'⁶²⁸ Soon afterwards the VPP was dissolved and the UVF acknowledged that 'the low poll for the VPP candidate indicates that the general public does not support the political involvement of the UVF. It would, therefore, be fruitless for the UVF to continue to promote the Volunteer Party as a party political machine.'⁶²⁹

The end-result was the UVF pulling back from politics and quickly resuming its sectarian attacks, believing that it was the only way to restore prominence within the Protestant community. Indeed, the British concessions proved to be premature, and when the UVF returned to violence - an act that was perceived as a slap in the face of the British government - it was re-proscribed in October 1975. Secretary Rees himself justified the decision arguing that:

Unfortunately, it became increasingly clear during 1975 that members of the UVF were deeply involved in sectarian violence and that the organisation was departing from the path of political engagement...It became abundantly clear that a large number of members of the UVF were once more wedded to violence.⁶³⁰

The UVF's new sectarian campaign was especially disturbing for the British government that dreaded further escalation in the level of violence.

⁶²⁶ Interview with Dawn Purvis

⁶²⁷ Richards, Anthony. "Terrorist Groups and their Political Fronts", in Dingley, James. *Combating Terrorism in Northern Ireland* (Oxon: Routledge, 2009), p. 93

⁶²⁸ CJ 4/1919, A19, Fortnight, Vol. 6

⁶²⁹ UVF Brigade HQ Staff statement, *Belfast Telegraph*, 11/11/1974

⁶³⁰ CJ 4/1919, HOC, 4.11.1975

Therefore, it was met with the largest police and army operations combining aggressive military and judicial measures, that resulted in the killing and apprehension of many of the hard-core cadre of the UVF. The defeat of the UVF led Gusty Spence, who by then advocated for non-violence, to strongly express his political ideas in an attempt to influence the organisation's leadership to embrace democratic politics. In his view, the UVF should 'grease the guns and put them away. If the IRA have to be dealt with, let the security forces deal with them.'⁶³¹ Accordingly, Spence began inspiring loyalists to become involved in party politics and social activity. His words were aimed at persuading UVF members to think positively about the option of political compromise. Indeed, Spence's words had a real impact on many members, as described by one UVF prisoner: 'I just came to the conclusion that some day we were going to have to talk and come to some form of accommodation.'⁶³²

Clearly, the use of political exclusion did not succeed in the case of the UVF. Yet, it cannot be regarded as a total failure. Dawn Purvis argues that the VPP's electoral defeat did not discourage the UVF because it instilled the understanding that political participation was about giving the loyalists a right to be heard:

There were still political thinkers within the VPP and in the prisoner class within the UVF who believed that this was the way forward for Northern Ireland. That working-class people were cannon-fodder and being used by the unionist politicians and they needed to have their own voice.⁶³³

Although the UVF returned to sectarian violence after the political fiasco of the VPP, the British government identified that a conscious decision was made by many UVF members to move away from violence and support political accommodation and the peace process. Apart from embarking on military and judicial campaigns to counter republican and loyalist violence, the government decided to encourage the process of disillusionment of terrorist activity that

⁶³¹ Sinnerton, p. 111

⁶³² Horgan, p. 56

⁶³³ Interview with Dawn Purvis

was mainly underway among imprisoned UVF members. Inside prison, under the supervision of British security services, UVF men became engaged in a political dialogue not only amongst themselves but also with their republican rivals. In retrospect, many loyalist politicians that began their paramilitary period in the ranks of the UVF, and later supported the Good Friday Agreement, owe their political indoctrination to their experiences in prison. To many of them, the 'mentor' was Gusty Spence, who according to Taylor 'more than any other single person sowed in the hard soil of Long Kesh the political ideas that were to flourish years later in the form of the UVF's new political party, the PUP.'⁶³⁴

Indeed, political thinking was the ideological building block for establishing the PUP in 1977. The party wanted to attract mainly 'former loyalist paramilitaries or any other member of the public who wanted to take a political road but who were unsympathetic towards mainstream unionist parties.'⁶³⁵ The PUP represented a vanguard political course within loyalism, one that not only endorsed a dialogue with republicans but also accepted the Irish dimension and the accommodation of nationalists in the Northern Ireland government. It also promoted a socialist agenda that rejected the Protestant supremacy by arguing that the 'working-class of both communities was mistreated by the unionist leadership.'⁶³⁶ Essentially, the establishment of the PUP was welcomed by the British government, that decided to embrace the new unionist party and cooperate with it in order to find ways to attract unionists and loyalists into a peace process and bolster the need for a political resolution.

Since its foundation the PUP supported the peace process, and many of its leaders, who were former terrorists that spent time in prison, played a critical role in mobilising the loyalists to support the Good Friday Agreement. The PUP's voice represented those Protestants who rejected the 'politics of

⁶³⁴ Taylor, p. 141

⁶³⁵ Sinnerton, p. 110

⁶³⁶ Tonge, p. 61-62

fear' and wanted a better future for their families and community.⁶³⁷ Taylor points out that the PUP represented a new breed of politicians who 'were in the business of saying "yes" – on certain conditions – instead of what had always appeared to be the loyalist traditional "no"'.⁶³⁸ One of the key achievements of the PUP was offering political analysis to the UVF, eventually leading to the 1994 ceasefire. It was the PUP which presented the UVF with the idea to respond positively to the IRA's ceasefire, articulating the political benefits of such a decision and insisting on a "no first strike" policy.⁶³⁹

Against all odds, the ceasefire held for three years during which British and Irish governments consulted regularly with the PUP. According to Purvis, the UVF's ceasefire was the long-awaited opportunity for the PUP to make a real impact on political developments in Northern Ireland. It enabled the PUP to strengthen its public profile locally and internationally and subsequently the legitimacy of the party's objectives was finally recognised. Furthermore, it was able to promote welfare and social issues that substantially increased its electoral base.⁶⁴⁰ The UVF expected to benefit from the PUP's political prosperity and believed that the 'electoral mandate of those associated with it would be recognised, and they would be treated like any other political party for the purposes of political dialogue.'⁶⁴¹ The UVF's willingness to compromise and end violence had a larger effect; it increased the sense of solidarity and confidence among loyalists who seriously considered political action, particularly since the 'time was ripe to begin the task of politicising the wider loyalist community...and to talk their brand of unionism to a wider public.'⁶⁴²

Riding on its success to convince the UVF to declare and uphold the ceasefire, the PUP broke out from the loyalist camp and attracted many new

⁶³⁷ Interview with Dawn Purvis

⁶³⁸ Taylor, p. 216

⁶³⁹ Sinnerton, pp. 156-168

⁶⁴⁰ Interview with Dawn Purvis

⁶⁴¹ Mansergh, p. 37

⁶⁴² Sinnerton, p. 134

supporters who had no paramilitary experience whatsoever.⁶⁴³ It performed relatively well in the 1996 elections to the Protestant All Party Talks, the forum that sent representatives to the peace talks, winning 3.5% of the total unionist electorate and taking two seats in the Forum.⁶⁴⁴ More importantly, from being the PUP's best electoral performance ever, the party was now 'in a position to exercise what it sought dearly, influence, though they had no delusions about exercising power.'⁶⁴⁵

In an attempt to capitalise on its electoral success, the British government sought to engage with the PUP, which supported the main pillars of every peace initiative, primarily a democratic devolved administration. For the British government it was vital that loyalist parties would be represented in the peace talks, as they could potentially bring the armed organisations into the political process. But the official negotiations that opened at Stormont in June 1996, without Sinn Féin, quickly came to a halt. The stumbling block was the issue of decommissioning that was brought to the centre by the British government and unionists. They emphasised how crucial it is for building confidence and portraying good will to put the past behind, and wished that the terrorist organisations would begin to disarm before the opening of the peace talks.⁶⁴⁶

Despite the evident logic in decommissioning for defusing tension and hostility and showing a commitment to the peace process, the British government was met with a firm refusal from paramilitaries on both sides. The UVF claimed that retention of its arms was a defensive measure and that it would be unimaginable to ask loyalists to decommission 'with a fully operational heavily armed Republican war machine intact and refusing to

⁶⁴³ Edwards, Aaron and Bloomer, Stephen. "A Watching Brief? The Political Strategy of Progressive Loyalism Since 1994", *Conflict Transformation Papers*, Vol. 8 (September 2004), pp. 16-17

⁶⁴⁴ Loyalists could have performed exceptionally well if the PUP and the UDP (the UDA's political wing) had combined forces, but the two organisations 'were more likely to shoot at each other rather than build an electoral alliance.' (Cusack and McDonald, p. 337)

⁶⁴⁵ Sinnerton, p. 187

⁶⁴⁶ Tonge, p. 169-171

relinquish their arsenals.'⁶⁴⁷ As a compromise, the PUP suggested that decommissioning should not be presented as a precondition to negotiations, but must take place 'in tandem with the development of genuine trust and mutual respect between the several parties formerly engaged in the conflict.'⁶⁴⁸

Loyal to its commitment for shared responsibility between unionists and nationalists for the benefit of the country rather than local political interests, the PUP became a significant player in the peace process by advocating a conflict transformation approach. Despite the suspicion that unionists felt towards the Good Friday Agreement, the party strongly campaigned for loyalist support arguing that the agreement guarantees the 'security of the Union as long as the majority of the people of Northern Ireland wanted to remain part of the United Kingdom.'⁶⁴⁹

Shortly after the signing of the agreement, the first National Assembly elections were scheduled. The British government saw the elections as the first major test to the fragile agreement and was hoping that it would lead to stability and prosperity in Northern Ireland. The PUP expected to reap the fruits of peace and translate its prominence among loyalists into electoral success, predicting between five to six seats in the Assembly.⁶⁵⁰ It was in the best interest of the British government that loyalist parties would perform well in the elections, demonstrating not only their endorsement of the agreement but also their ability to persuade their constituencies to do the same. However, the internal split among loyalists that already led to scores of casualties also took its electoral toll; the PUP won only two seats. Perhaps the only consolation was that the old time loyalist nemesis, the UDA, performed even worse and their political party, the UDP, failed to win any seats.⁶⁵¹

⁶⁴⁷ Cusack and McDonlad, p. 329

⁶⁴⁸ "Principles of Loyalism", a PUP internal discussion paper, 1st November 2002, p. 34

⁶⁴⁹ Taylor, p. 251

⁶⁵⁰ Cusack and McDonlad, p. 370-371

⁶⁵¹ Although the UDP endorsed the Good Friday Agreement its political standing was inconsequential and in 2001 the party dissolved.

In an attempt to explain the failure to cultivate a more profound political legitimacy among the Protestant electorate, Dawn Purvis blames the DUP and Ian Paisley for constantly advocating the selling out of Northern Ireland to the unionist community, whilst labelling PUP politicians as 'peacenics' or 'hard men going soft.' In a critical tone towards the Protestant electoral trends, she admits that the support for the PUP did not reflect itself in votes, mainly because:

People voted for what they did not want as opposed to what they wanted. Paisley's message was consistent in its negativity so he could tell people what he did not want, and if they did not want Sinn Fein and a united Ireland they should vote for him.⁶⁵²

Gusty Spence attributed some of the electoral disappointment to the fact that unlike IRA men who were Sinn Fein supporters, 'the UVF was never like that,' and when election time arrived 'members of the UVF worked for other political parties in opposition to the PUP.'⁶⁵³

From the pinnacle point of 1998 when many Protestants were reassured that they could put the Troubles behind and look forward to a better future for Northern Ireland, it was all downhill for the PUP, and the UVF's behaviour and actions were much to blame. In a report that was ordered by the PUP in 2004 to look at the internal dialogue within loyalism, the authors concluded that the PUP's 'pragmatic non-combatant style of politics' was 'tarnished by the violent actions perpetrated by its paramilitary "partners".'⁶⁵⁴ Although the UVF ceased all armed operations against Catholics or the security forces, instead of standing down its members diverted their violent actions against fellow Protestants, during a period that was known as the "Shankill Feud". It also openly declared that it continued to recruit, rearm and train in case the war against the IRA resumed.⁶⁵⁵ But probably the worst politically damaging activity that the UVF took part in since 1998 was drug trafficking, racketeering and other mafia-like criminal offences. These illegal activities, as well as the use

⁶⁵² Interview with Dawn Purvis

⁶⁵³ Sinnerton, p. 195

⁶⁵⁴ Edwards and Bloomer, p. 5

⁶⁵⁵ Taylor, p. 265

of punishment beatings against anti-social individuals, particularly hampered the PUP's potential to grow as a major political force.⁶⁵⁶

Decommissioning was another issue that damaged the PUP's political growth. The unionist First Minister, David Trimble, believed that decommissioning was imperative to the success of the agreement and argued that the 'sight of guns being destroyed and explosives put beyond use, no matter how few, would shatter the myth that armed groups never surrender their arsenals.'⁶⁵⁷ The UVF, however, insisted that disarmament was merely a tactical manoeuvre of unionist leaders to attract the Sinn Féin into a power-sharing executive. Accordingly, it issued a statement that the conditions for arms removal did not exist and therefore it refused to surrender any weapons until the IRA reciprocated.⁶⁵⁸ Since most unionists supported decommissioning, the UVF insistence on retaining its weapons was detrimental to the PUP's political standing. At times when Gerry Adams acknowledged in the high-profile venue of the World Economic Forum in February 2002 that nationalists cannot 'force upon unionism an all-Ireland state which doesn't have their assent or consent,' the UVF's refusal to decommission and inability to adapt to the new atmosphere of peace and conciliation stood as a stark contrast.⁶⁵⁹

Undoubtedly, the link between the UVF and the PUP inflicted terminal damage on the latter's political prospects. The fact that many unionists became increasingly critical of the economic, social and communal benefits that were supposedly attached to the peace process reflected poorly on the PUP's political growth. As a result, in the 2003 election the PUP lost one seat with David Ervine remaining its sole representative to the Northern Ireland Assembly. His ability to represent the loyalist agenda was significantly reduced.⁶⁶⁰ McAuley explains that the limited support for the PUP stems from the prevailing feelings voiced

⁶⁵⁶ McAuley, pp. 531-532

⁶⁵⁷ McDonald, p. 274

⁶⁵⁸ Combat Magazine, September 1999, p. 2

⁶⁵⁹ http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/northern_ireland/1801879.stm (accessed 5/9/08)

⁶⁶⁰ The complete election results can be viewed in: <http://www.ark.ac.uk/elections/fa03.htm> (accessed 12/4/10)

among Protestants of uncertainty about their future and that the union is once again under threat.⁶⁶¹ In a broader outlook, Edwards and Bloomer concluded that the 'challenge of transforming and unifying the Loyalist working class to a stage where this translates into electoral strength was probably impossible.'⁶⁶² Under such political climate, Paisley's DUP was able to frame itself as the only guardian against Catholic dominance, and to win 30 seats to become the largest party in the assembly.

Two months before the 2007 elections, David Ervine died and Dawn Purvis was elected as the new party leader, becoming the first woman to lead a unionist party in Northern Ireland. The expectations that her election would boost the party's public image and inspire Protestant women to vote for the PUP were not met. Little over 3,800 people voted for the PUP in the general elections, which was barely enough for Dawn Purvis to maintain her own seat.⁶⁶³ In a reality in which the PUP was struggling to remain a viable political actor in Northern Ireland politics and the Protestant support in the loyalist cause was marginal, the UVF's announcement about ending its terrorism campaign was expected, and perhaps even inevitable.

INTERNATIONAL FACTORS

Undoubtedly, the least researched aspect of the story of the modern UVF, is the influence of the international dimension on its grand-strategy and day-to-day tactics. Unlike the IRA that mastered the international theatre and capitalised on its benefits, the UVF faced difficulties in getting the exposure, support and profits that often come together when reaching to the outside. Therefore, arguing that such influence does in fact exist and analysing its effects, poses a challenge to any researcher who claims that the international

⁶⁶¹ McAuley, pp. 535-537

⁶⁶² Edwards and Bloomer, p. 35

⁶⁶³ The complete election results can be viewed in: <http://www.ark.ac.uk/elections/fa07.htm> (accessed 12/4/10)

system should not be overlooked when investigating a terrorist organisation's transition from violence to peaceful politics.

It is often argued that the Northern Ireland conflict attracted, from the outset, immense international attention and intervention that 'influenced the policies of the British and Irish governments and the expectations of the communities.'⁶⁶⁴ The fact is, however, that until the early 1990s there was little international interest in the Northern Ireland conflict. Lord Alderdice, a prominent Northern Ireland politician, even suggested that 'the British government did not want any international involvement at all,' arguing that this was an internal matter to the United Kingdom to be resolved by the British government.⁶⁶⁵ Indeed, at that time, the international focus was pointed towards other Cold War theaters of conflict, mainly in the Middle-East, Asia and Africa. In the absence of international intervention in the Northern Ireland conflict, Protestants and Catholics alike hoped that the British and Irish governments could bring about a peaceful end to the Troubles by themselves.

With the end of the Cold War and the peaceful settlements of protracted conflicts in South Africa and the Middle-East, the world's attention diverted from the periphery to the heart of Europe. At this point the Northern Ireland conflict could not remain an isolated dispute and the ramifications of the post-Cold War era had a strong impact on the behaviour of all parties operating in the province. Jonathan Tonge explains that new hopes for reconciliation replaced sentiments of hostility and communal rivalry, since the 'ending of the Cold War provided a convenient framework to develop the [peace] process and allowed the ditching of ideological baggage.'⁶⁶⁶

Amidst such international environment, the dominant view in the province was: 'if Jews and Arabs can do it in Palestine, if blacks and whites can do it in South Africa, why can't Protestants and Catholics do it in Northern

⁶⁶⁴ Ruane and Todd, p. 227

⁶⁶⁵ Interview with Lord Alderdice, Jerusalem, Israel, 28/3/2009

⁶⁶⁶ Tonge, Jonathan. *The New Northern Irish Politics* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), p. 237

Ireland?'⁶⁶⁷ All the parties in the conflict were prepared to "internationalise" the Northern Ireland problem. Soon, external actors, primarily the United States and the European Union, became involved and were instrumental in accelerating conflict resolution and consolidating political developments. Apart from economic support, the US and the EU encouraged and pressured the parties 'to maintain their commitment to finding a compromise solution to the conflicting claims of unionists and nationalists over Northern Ireland.'⁶⁶⁸ Peter Hain, former Secretary for Northern Ireland, concluded that the international community made an important contribution to the peace process by providing reassurances and injecting trust that supplemented the efforts of the British Irish governments.⁶⁶⁹

Undoubtedly, the biggest international contribution for the transition from violence to peaceful politics in Northern Ireland is attributed to the United States. Traditionally, American administrations took a non-interventionist approach and maintained that Northern Ireland was a domestic concern of Britain. However, the large Irish-American community living in the US was heavily involved in the conflict in their homeland. They followed the Troubles closely and contributed not only money and arms to both loyalists and republicans, but also put pressure on American politicians to actively intervene in the conflict. Consequently, American presidents and congressmen were drawn into the conflict and put diplomatic pressure on British leaders to seek a peaceful resolution. They also allocated financial resources to support the peace process and cross-border initiatives, aimed at bringing Catholics and Protestants to sit together and have a serious dialogue.⁶⁷⁰

The American involvement in Northern Ireland further intensified under the leadership of President Bill Clinton. The foreign policy during his

⁶⁶⁷ Boyle, Kevin and Hadden, Tom. "The Peace Process in Northern Ireland", *International Affairs*, 71:2 (1995), p. 269

⁶⁶⁸ Ibid, p. 279

⁶⁶⁹ Speech by Peter Hain MP at Chatham House, London, UK, 12/6/2007

⁶⁷⁰ Ruane and Todd, pp. 273-279

administration placed a high priority for the Northern Ireland conflict.⁶⁷¹ Clinton's commitment to resolving the conflict goes beyond that of any previous president, and he played a critical role 'in both pushing the peace process along and bringing it to a successful conclusion in 1998.'⁶⁷² In addition to exercising his political strength as leader of the "free world", Clinton appointed a special envoy, Senator George Mitchell, to serve as a mediator between all the parties involved and to provide American political and economic support in the peace process. Taylor determines that without Mitchell's personal involvement and the American political pressure 'it is unlikely that the Good Friday Agreement would ever have been finalised.'⁶⁷³

While the international intervention and mediation greatly affected the British and Irish governments and local parties, it had another, somewhat indirect, effect on the republican and loyalist terrorist organisations. In the post-Cold war balance of power, headed by the US, it was far more difficult for the terrorist organisations in Northern Ireland to legitimise a strategy of sectarian violence.⁶⁷⁴ Specifically, the 9/11 attacks against American targets had a substantial effect on those in Northern Ireland who were engaged in violence. Lord Alderdice explains that after the attacks international public opinion, and particularly Americans, became very intolerant of the tactic of terrorism and 'anybody that might be involved in using this tactic was on the wrong side of the game.'⁶⁷⁵ At times of changing political context, both locally and internationally, the UVF was struggling to maintain meaningful public support and the continuation of armed attacks under such circumstances could have brought the organisation to its knees. Indeed, the 9/11 attacks further emboldened the UVF to embark on a process of re-thinking its broader policy objectives, which ultimately resulted in the organisation's abandonment of

⁶⁷¹ O'Grady, Joseph. "An Irish Policy Born in the USA: Clinton's Break with the Past", *Foreign Affairs* (75:3, May-June 1996), pp. 2-7

⁶⁷² Cox, Michael. "The War That Came in from the Cold: Clinton and the Irish Question", *World Policy Journal*, 16:1 (Spring 1999), p. 60

⁶⁷³ Taylor, p. 249

⁶⁷⁴ Cox, Michael. "Bringing in the 'international': The IRA ceasefire and the end of the Cold War", *International Affairs*, 73:4 (October 1997), p. 677

⁶⁷⁵ Interview with Lord Alderdice

military means.

Another international aspect that contributed to the UVF's transition to peaceful political activity is the understanding that communicating its ideology and policy to the world could help the loyalist cause. In principle, the IRA has been more exposed to the international arena, and enjoyed funds, weapons and sympathy from external communities. Consequently, it was also more susceptible to international pressure and paid attention to political developments outside the British-Irish boundaries. The UVF, however, acknowledged that it was more or less internationally friendless outside the UK, and therefore, unlike the IRA, could not receive similar political and logistical support from other states.

Since nationalist demands were more popular in the eyes of the international community, and external actors were more favourable to their position, unionists, and particularly loyalists, felt that they 'have few friends in the world.'⁶⁷⁶ Shortly after the 1994 ceasefire, the peace process boosted and the international attention in the conflict increased dramatically. Fearing the nationalist political parties would mobilise American and European support for their cause, the UVF, through its political representative in the PUP, believed that the loyalists must also find a way to gain widespread sympathy and impact political developments in Northern Ireland.⁶⁷⁷

An important event that had a significant effect on the UVF's view of the international dimension was Gerry Adams' visits to the US and subsequent meetings with President Clinton. Granting a visa to Adams became a controversial subject, to which the British government, the unionist leadership and key American officials were strongly against. Despite the opposition, Clinton authorised Adams' visit to the US, since he 'thought it was the best shot we had to bring the violence to an end.'⁶⁷⁸ The hand-shaking between the two

⁶⁷⁶ Ruane and Todd, p. 289

⁶⁷⁷ Sinnerton, pp. 169-181

⁶⁷⁸ Clinton, Bill. *My Life* (New York: Vintage Books, 2004), p. 581

leaders held a broader meaning, since the lesson learned by the UVF was that being part of the peace process paid dividends and granted international standing and legitimacy. Lord Alderdice reveals that the loyalists were unhappy with Adams's visit to the US, but more importantly they wondered why their own leaders were not doing the same.⁶⁷⁹ Subsequently, UVF and PUP leaders were looking for similar opportunities that would eventually establish them as contributing players in the peace process. The loyalist universal ceasefire presented such an opportunity, and soon UVF and PUP leaders received an invitation to visit the US. After years of nationalist perspectives dominating the international discourse, the UVF was able to deliver its own political views across the Atlantic. Sinnerton argues that UVF leaders were able to capitalise upon the visit in order to gain credibility among American political circles and to dispel many misconceptions. Furthermore, they were successful in articulating their side of the story and positioning themselves as bona fide political entities.⁶⁸⁰

As a result of the successful peace talks and the demand that terrorist organisations in Northern Ireland commit to non-violent means, the issue of decommissioning was given renewed attention. This was another dimension of international involvement that greatly affected the terrorist organisations in Northern Ireland. George Mitchell claims in his personal account that he was convinced that the British demand for decommissioning prior to entering negotiations was unworkable. Instead, he set forth in 1996 an alternative that required all parties involved in the process to commit exclusively to democratic means and total and parallel disarmament of all terrorist organisations verifiable by an international independent commission.⁶⁸¹ In August 1997 an Independent International Commission on Decommissioning (IICD) was established to oversee and execute the decommissioning of arms and to report to the British and Irish governments. Throughout the years, the commission met with individuals from all the armed organisations to determine the terms

⁶⁷⁹ Interview with Lord Alderdice

⁶⁸⁰ Sinnerton, pp. 171-172

⁶⁸¹ Mitchell, pp. 29-36

and methods under which decommissioning would be executed.

The first act of decommissioning, as mentioned earlier, was carried out by LVF members in December 1998. Interestingly, it was executed in public with media present. All other acts were done in private with verification by the Commission. The IRA's first decommissioning act was announced in October 2001, shortly after the 9/11 attacks, and others acts followed months later. By the end of 2005, the Commission announced the completion of IRA arms decommissioning.⁶⁸² Four years later, in June 2009, the UVF agreed to surrender all arms under its control to the Commission.⁶⁸³

Certainly, dealing with the weapons was both critical to the success of the peace process as well as difficult to handle. However, Lord Alderdice argues that it became 'far too big of an issue and it held things up for a long time.' In his view, the IICD tended to be reactive to events in Northern Ireland and they never took initiative, 'they just sat and waited...[whilst] they could have pushed the process along.'⁶⁸⁴ Despite the criticism, the appointment and the workings of the IICD were essential for addressing the contending constitutional and political issues. In hindsight, it is clear that the IICD served as a confidence-building mechanism that generated cooperation from both republican and loyalist paramilitaries.⁶⁸⁵ In effect it played a leading role in eliminating the military instrument of the Northern Ireland conflict.

Undoubtedly, the UVF owes at least some of its acceptance as an integral actor within the Northern Ireland political system to events and dynamics that had a global impact. Of course, the organisation did not control any of them and at times it was unwillingly influenced by them. Yet, it would be unjustified to ignore the fact that the UVF's decision to open up towards the international dimension was valuable to its transformation from a violent movement into a

⁶⁸² Final Report of the Independent International Commission on Decommissioning (published in July 2011), p. 6

⁶⁸³ Ibid, pp. 10-11

⁶⁸⁴ Interview with Lord Alderdice

⁶⁸⁵ McInnes, Colin. "The Decommissioning of Terrorist Weapons and the Peace Process in Northern Ireland", *Contemporary Security Policy*, 18:3 (1997), pp. 83-103

political actor.

CONCLUSIONS

Despite the common idiom phrased by John Whyte that 'in proportion to size, Northern Ireland is the most heavily researched area on earth,' the UVF, which was, by all means, a central actor in the loyalist apparatus, has been largely ignored.⁶⁸⁶ Due to some of the unique characteristics that have been outlined throughout this chapter, that eventually led to the abandonment of violence and the adherence to strictly peaceful means, the UVF should have attracted more academic attention as well as tactical and strategic analysis.

First and foremost, since the UVF was defined as a pro-state organisation it was bound to operate under distinctive security, political and social constraints which often do not apply to anti-state terrorist organisations. This uniqueness entails different sets of organisational, domestic and international factors that eventually led to a transformational change in the UVF's strategy, which in essence preferred political integration over the continuation of violence.

Indeed, the UVF was a vicious terrorist organisation that fought to preserve the constitutional and ethnic link of Northern Ireland to Britain, without benefiting from the state's security and legal protection or the popular support of the Protestant community as a whole. Additionally, it consistently expressed its disenchantment with the mainstream unionist leadership, whom it blamed for mishandling the Protestant interests. More distinguishable was the UVF's scepticism that there is a military solution to the Northern Ireland conflict and support in the peace process. The close relations between the UVF and the standalone PUP had a further moderating effect on the UVF's application of violence and led to its positive involvement in promoting a negotiated settlement. It is, indeed, an unusual case when a terrorist

⁶⁸⁶ Whyte, John. *Interpreting Northern Ireland* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Paperbacks, 1990), p.viii

organisation that killed more than 500 people in its murderous campaign, displays a political understanding that a deep-rooted conflict can only be resolved peacefully.

The evolution of the UVF from a radical terrorist organisation to an influential actor in the Northern Ireland power struggle is somewhat convoluted and at times difficult to follow. However, the methodological approach adopted in this chapter is meant to assist in clarifying the UVF's roadmap that culminated in its abandonment of violence and adherence to a civilianised political process. Yet, it was not always clear that the UVF would take this path.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, when the prospects for a peaceful resolution were unimaginable, the UVF was committed to ferociously defending the Protestant community against republican violence. Ordinary Catholics as well as republicans were executed without hesitation and the policy of "no surrender" was used to justify the UVF's sectarian killing campaign. At that time, the UVF showed little interest in becoming a credible political force and instead maintained a strong military capability in order to play a significant role and pose as the savior of Ulster and not slide into obscurity.⁶⁸⁷ Evidently, some of the most horrific terrorist attacks in the history of the Northern Ireland conflict are attributed to the UVF and therefore its members are 'placed outside the honourable tradition, and firmly in the terrorist mould.'⁶⁸⁸

However, a closer look on the application of UVF's violence reveals some behavioural features that could indicate an instrumental approach. The UVF displayed restraint and discipline, especially during the ceasefires in 1973, 1991 and 1994. When unauthorised attacks did occur, the UVF demonstrated decisiveness in battling such actions, such as banishing senior and popular commanders like Billy Wright. Although not always successful, the UVF

⁶⁸⁷ McIlheney, pp. 33-40

⁶⁸⁸ Cusack and McDonald, p. 38

genuinely attempted to allow political dialogue to continue without the interference of violent actions that could destabilise the peace process.

Moreover, the UVF believed in maintaining law and order in the territories under its control, not only for the benefit of the community but also to win the hearts and minds of Protestants who were courted by the rival loyalist terrorist organisations. Ultimately, the UVF was always aware of its public standing among the Protestant community and was careful to adjust its actions according to the security and political developments in Northern Ireland. As such, when personal security in the streets of Northern Ireland improved, the IRA laid down its arms and many of the loyalist objectives had been accomplished, the UVF was mindful that there was little demand and less tolerance for violence among working-class Protestants.⁶⁸⁹ In light of these factors, the UVF's decision in May 2007 to assume a non-military civilianised role is comprehensible.

Among UVF members, the recognition that politics is as important as violence infused back in the early 1970s when British governments invested greater political and security resources in resolving the Northern Ireland conflict. At times when effective political representation was most needed, the UVF was convinced that the constitutional unionist leaders could not be trusted and that their actions have been 'highly detrimental to the aspirations of the Unionist community in general, and working class loyalism in particular.'⁶⁹⁰ Even the status of Ian Paisley, who established himself as an alternative to the mainstream unionist politicians and largely shaped loyalist thinking, deteriorated dramatically in the eyes of UVF members. The early broad sympathy towards Paisley's political ideas turned into outright hostility.⁶⁹¹

Clearly, the UVF's disappointment in the unionist leadership together with the increase of Britain's military involvement in the province gave way to

⁶⁸⁹ Bruce, *Turf War and Peace*, p. 518

⁶⁹⁰ McAuley, p. 528

⁶⁹¹ Cusack and McDonald, p. 18

lawful party politics. The establishment of the VPP in 1974 was a direct outcome of the UVF's desire to better represent the loyalist cause. Although the UVF's flirtation with political action failed miserably, it reinforced the need to find a credible channel for political expression as a means to advance its ideological thinking and mobilise public support. The association with the PUP in 1977 enabled the UVF to concentrate on promoting social and economic issues that bolstered an image of a responsible organisation that has more to offer than violence. Edwards concludes that the relationship between the UVF and the PUP 'has been an important factor in undermining the UVF's use of military instrument.'⁶⁹²

Alongside the consciousness of the shortcomings of violence and the merits that accompany political participation, the fact that the UVF since its inception operated in a competitive environment contributed significantly to its decision to renounce violence and concentrate on peaceful politics. For years the UDA was the UVF's main rival, and at times it was the largest loyalist terrorist organisation. The UVF and the UDA were rarely on good terms and battled against each other for territory, money, weapons and recruits.

In 1996 the UVF encountered a split in its ranks when Billy Wright formed the breakaway faction LVF that opposed the UVF's moderate politics. Operating within a tri-polar balance of power resulted in an internal loyalist feud that on many occasions escalated into armed clashes and casualties. Clearly, competing with strong and popular adversaries forced the UVF to modify its strategy in a way that would match the socio-political setting in Northern Ireland. Consequently, as the peace talks intensified the UVF tightened its relations with the PUP and allowed it to take the lead in the peace process to distance itself from its rivals that rejected any political solution and accused the UVF of betraying loyalism. The fact that the UVF was the loyalist terrorist organisation that best kept its ceasefires and most committed to the peace process was, to a certain extent, connected to the intense competition

⁶⁹² Edwards, p. 155

over the Protestant public support. This rivalry contributed to the UVF's decision to embrace a non-military strategy and the concept of conflict transformation.

Finally, the link between the need to mobilise public support and being defined as a pro-state terrorist organisation proved itself as crucial in the UVF's decision to join politics. In principle, the UVF encountered difficulties attracting public support and developing a coherent role within the Northern Ireland power-struggle 'because the people they claim to serve are not by-and-large alienated from the state and from major social institutions.'⁶⁹³ Since the UVF never enjoyed the support of the masses, being a pro-state organisation meant that it would always be secondary to the state, that could propose better incentives and legal framework to those who wished to act on behalf of the union.

The UVF's efforts to offer Protestants substitute institutions increasingly failed as the level of violence dropped and the British military presence and political involvement intensified. Subsequently, Protestants began to denounce the UVF's indiscriminate sectarian murders and rendered the terrorist organisation's public support and active cadre in a diminishing spiral.⁶⁹⁴ The UVF's attempts to find popular support and financial assistance outside Britain were even less successful, as the only political forces that agreed to join hands with the Marxist-oriented terrorist organisation were right-wing racist and fascist groups in Western Europe – not exactly the international network that the UVF had in mind.

In dealing with terrorism in Northern Ireland, British governments executed three security-cycles that overall had 'achieved a considerable amount of success in apprehending terrorists and containing the violence in Northern Ireland.'⁶⁹⁵ The aggressive military approach joined with tough legal

⁶⁹³ Bruce, *Turf War and Peace*, p. 518

⁶⁹⁴ Bruce, "The problems of 'pro-state' terrorism: Loyalist paramilitaries in Northern Ireland", pp. 67-88

⁶⁹⁵ Bamford, p. 581

measures had taken their toll on the UVF, and consequently its status within the Protestant community had been progressively weakened since the 1980s onwards. The large number of members, who were either killed, injured or in jail, put the UVF in a state of shock and paralysis. It also gave rise to a new leadership 'who wished to reduce the amount of ill-directed and random violence and increase the amount of community work and political action,' thus planting the first seeds of serious political thinking.⁶⁹⁶

With the advance of the peace process since the mid 1980s, the UVF preferred to join the bandwagon rather than trail behind, as described by Bill Rolston: 'most UVF men saw themselves as irregulars. When the war ended that was it. They went back to being plumbers, welders or whatever their trade was.'⁶⁹⁷ Consequently, the number of attacks against Catholics decreased drastically (instead the guns were pointed against loyalist rivals) until it stopped completely with the 2007 announcement. Facing the British comprehensive security policy, the UVF wished to save some of its public stature and looked for other ways to do so. The only available way was to increase the organisation's political appearance through its legal arm, the PUP. The UVF found that when peace became a viable option, the British and Irish peoples, and republicans to some extent, were more susceptible to its political messages than to its violent ideology.

The second pillar of Britain's policy towards Northern Ireland was based on political instruments aimed at bringing the conflict to an end and the rival communities to accept peaceful co-existence. The two primary themes that dominated the British strategy were consent and compromise. Based on these grounds, several attempts were made, since the early 1970s, to reach a negotiated settlement, all encompassing some version of a power-sharing coalition. Ultimately, a peaceful resolution between unionists and nationalists was reached in April 1998, and later reaffirmed by the St. Andrews Agreement

⁶⁹⁶ Bruce, *The Red Hand*, p. 131

⁶⁹⁷ Rolston, Bill. "Demobilization and Reintegration of Ex-Combatants: the Irish Case in International Perspective", *Social & Legal Studies* (16:2, June 2007), p. 274

in October 2006. The British intensive efforts and commitment to end the conflict, were summed up by Tony Blair, who argued that 'for British governments of whatever persuasion, the drain on resources and military manpower which Northern Ireland required made any prospect of peace extremely attractive.'⁶⁹⁸

In formulating several peace initiatives, British governments compelled the UVF to respond and to become an active participant in the political discourse should it strive for influence and responsibility. Indeed, the UVF was not always receptive to political dialogue that would put an end to its violence. In the 1970s, the British government used political exclusion as a mechanism designed to attract the UVF into a legal framework that would allow it to enjoy the benefits of a legitimate partner. Although the initial prospects were positive, it seemed that the general public opinion, and even the British government itself, were not ready to accept an authentic loyalist party. Had the experiment been successful at that time, and loyalism granted a voice in the Northern Ireland political system, many lives would have been spared.

Finally, on the domestic level, British governments recognised the importance of the PUP to bring the UVF and its loyalist supporters to the negotiation table. Above all, the PUP was perceived as a legitimate political partner, despite several key UVF commanders at the party's helms. The PUP had been instrumental in restraining the UVF's violence and maintaining the ceasefires in the 1990s. The party's effort did not go unnoticed, and British governments (as well as Irish governments for that matter) allowed the party to operate on the political scene and welcomed its involvement in the peace process. The fact is, according to Dawn Purvis, that the PUP condemned the UVF's violence and never made apologies for its attacks. What the PUP tried to create, was an understanding within the loyalist psyche for the reasons why things were happening and how they could be stopped.⁶⁹⁹ British governments did not stand in the PUP's way, realising that the party was about transforming

⁶⁹⁸ Blair, Tony. *A Journey: My Political Life* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010), p.159

⁶⁹⁹ Interview with Dawn Purvis

the situation from violence to peace while addressing the root causes of the conflict peacefully and democratically. Clearly, the party's ideology and strategy were ultimately successful and the UVF followed the democratic course paved by the PUP since its foundation.

The last element that guaranteed that the UVF would take the unavoidable path towards civilianised politics was the effect of the international dimension on its fundamental strategy and outlook of the organisation's role in the Northern Ireland conflict. This proposition is often overlooked by academics and professionals, as illustrated by M.L.R. Smith, who suggests that 'studies which seek to illuminate the Northern Ireland conflict with reference to the wider world remain few in number and rarely connect with international relation thinking.'⁷⁰⁰

Surely, the international effects on the UVF were somewhat indirect, but they were strong enough to receive the attention of the loyalist terrorist organisation, the PUP and their supporters. The international atmosphere in the post-Cold War era that was dominated by peaceful roadmaps, multilateral dialogue and intervention, culminated in resolution of several protracted conflicts in Africa and the Middle-East. The people of Northern Ireland demanded the same stamina, decisiveness and determination from their own leaders to do their utmost to resolve their all-encompassing conflict. The fact the American president Bill Clinton elevated the Northern Ireland conflict to the top of his foreign policy agenda, and defined the Irish issue as 'one of the great passions of my presidency,' certainly played a key role in ending the violence.⁷⁰¹

Clinton's tenacity over the Northern Ireland conflict affected all the parties involved, including the UVF. The international attention and the benefits that it carried were bequeathed to the IRA, and the UVF did not sit by idly. In

⁷⁰⁰ Smith, M.L.R. "The Intellectual Internment of a Conflict: The Forgotten War in Northern Ireland", *International Affairs*, 75:1 (1999), p. 81

⁷⁰¹ Clinton, p. 401

order to receive similar proceeds, the UVF had to adjust its strategy to match the peaceful climate that characterised Northern Ireland in the 1990s. Consequently, the UVF declared and maintained a long-standing ceasefire and allowed the PUP to become the most fervent voice of the loyalist camp.

It should not be assumed that the American political power was the only international element that had a moderating effect on the UVF. The global consequences of the 9/11 atrocities that were carried out by Islamic terrorists, did not pass by the Christian terrorists in Northern Ireland. In an international environment that pledged zero tolerance towards any kind of violence that has political objectives, it was very difficult for the UVF to maintain its armed campaign aimed at defending the Protestant community. In a world where the republican enemy becomes less relevant, the personal security of your constituency is significantly improved, and violence is associated with blood-thirsty irrational Islamic murderers, for UVF men it seemed perfectly reasonable to prefer words over violence.

Another contributing factor that stemmed from the international dimension was the operation of the IICD. The setting of an international mechanism, that was headed by respectable and neutral figures, to provide assurances to the republican and loyalist armed organisations, was a primary instrument that assisted in assuaging the levels of hostility. Although loyalist terrorists 'at no point came under similar pressures as did republicans to disarm', in the end, it was the IICD that enabled each side to trust that the other had submitted its weapons.⁷⁰² Long after peace prevailed in Northern Ireland and the international players left the scene, it was the IICD that remained on-site and continued to carry the burden of scrutinising the decommissioning of various paramilitary organisations. The Committee's work was not only important for the present time, but even more so for the future. In case violence would erupt again, at least the republican and loyalist organisations would have fewer weapons available in storage.

⁷⁰² Rolston, p. 268

In conclusion, the peaceful resolution of the Northern Ireland conflict, whose origins could be traced back to the 12th century, provides hope that other conflicts, perhaps not as old but certainly as complicated, could also end in a similar outcome. A variety of forces and players have been actively involved in escalating the conflict, and even more in trying to resolve it. In his memoirs, President Clinton, rightfully, gives the credit for the resolution of the Northern Ireland conflict to the people of the province 'who had chosen the promise of peace over a poisoned past.'⁷⁰³ At least some of these people were members of the UVF and the IRA, who for years fought against each other and killed and injured thousands of innocent Protestants and Catholics. These people demonstrated their greatness by willing to put behind the hostility, the hatred and the politics of fear, and setting out a vision of the way forward. Above everything they realised that what Northern Ireland needs the most is stability, prosperity and peace within itself, and they were willing to pursue this with full force. Ultimately, they proved to themselves and to the world, that a shared vision of the future could transcend the dividing history and turn a war-struck province into a livable and prosperous society.

⁷⁰³ Clinton, p. 784-785

CHAPTER 4: HIZBALLAH



No comprehensive discussion of the integration of terrorist organisations into political systems would be complete without a detailed examination of Hizballah (in Arabic "*The Party of God*") – a Lebanese organisation that started its life as a terrorist and guerrilla movement and developed into a social and political party.⁷⁰⁴ Over the years, Hizballah has become the dominant actor in Lebanon's power system, whilst maintaining independent armed capabilities outside the reach of the official institutions of the state. Although many experts and scholars have written abundantly on Hizballah, its history, ideology, military and political strategies, there is no in-depth analysis of the specific duality of using violence while serving as a legitimate actor in Lebanon's political system.

Nowadays, Hizballah is recognised as one of the most formidable and ruthless terrorist organisations in the world. David Phillips famously wrote that Hizballah literally 'exploded onto the scene as one of the world's deadliest terrorist organisations,' referring to the series of suicide attacks against American and French targets in Lebanon in the early 1980s.⁷⁰⁵ Magnus Ranstorp, a leading scholar on militant Islamic movements, argued that Hizballah 'has been the main terrorist nemesis of Western governments and Israel, inflicting blow after blow against its self-proclaimed enemies of Islam through suicide-attacks, hostage-taking, and other forms of terrorism.'⁷⁰⁶ Due

⁷⁰⁴ There are various transliterations for spelling the name of the Shiite organisation. For uniformity purposes this study will use the name *Hizballah*.

⁷⁰⁵ Phillips, David. *From Bullets to Ballots: Violent Muslim Movements in Transition* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2009), p. 35

⁷⁰⁶ Ranstorp, Magnus, *Hizbollah's Command Leadership: Its Structure, Decision-Making and Relationship with Iranian Clergy and Institutions*, *Terrorism and Political Violence*, Vol. 6 No. 3 (Autumn 1994), p. 303

to its record of bloodshed and lethality, Hizballah was branded by an American State Department senior official the 'A-team of terrorists.'⁷⁰⁷

However, Hizballah is certainly not just a terrorist organisation. Earning a reputation as a ruthless violent organisation did not cause Hizballah to deviate from its ideological, social and political objectives. Although it is still formally committed to establishing an Islamic state in Lebanon and ridding it off foreign occupation, Hizballah has invested great resources to expand its influence among both the Shiite and the non-Shiite communities in Lebanon. Hizballah relies heavily on a well-organised system that provides social and welfare services to the Lebanese people to increase its support base, which often take over the role of the state. Although Hizballah's Secretary-General, Hassan Nasrallah sounds apologetic when he said that 'we [Hizballah] are not an alternative to the state, but where the state is absent we must be present,' the situation of a "state-within-a-state" is the organisation's strongest and most effective tool to consolidate its control over the Lebanese people.⁷⁰⁸ The popularity of Hizballah was translated into remarkable political achievements and its representatives have been elected to both parliamentary and governmental positions.

Besides Hizballah's charitable functions, it maintains the largest and most advanced weapons arsenal in Lebanon, which has been regularly used against Israel and other Lebanese groups in several military confrontations since 1982. Hizballah would not be able to attain such weapons and capabilities without the close assistance and support of its state sponsors – Iran and Syria. Although Hizballah is regularly used as a proxy by its patrons, it has been adjusting its identity and interests to the political and social circumstances in Lebanon and the region. Evidently, the participation in the electoral process in Lebanon, and the responsibilities that come with political success, have led

⁷⁰⁷ Cited in Byman, Daniel. "Should Hezbollah be Next?", *Foreign Affairs* (November/December 2003), p. 55

⁷⁰⁸ Noe, Nicholas (ed.). *Voice of Hezbollah: The Statements of Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah* (London: Verso, 2007), p. 406

Hizballah to express a more pragmatic approach and demonstrate greater commitment to the Lebanese nation and people. Nonetheless, the issue of disarmament still remains a taboo, and Hizballah continues to hold arms that are not under the control of Lebanon's army.

Ranstorp wrote that despite Hizballah's prominence it is one of the 'least understood terrorist organisation' in the world today.⁷⁰⁹ The purpose of this chapter is to provide a coherent explanation for how Hizballah transformed itself from a terrorist group into a powerful and influential political actor, and which uniquely for Lebanon, maintains exclusive control of an independent armed militia.

THE RISE OF HIZBALLAH

To a large extent Hizballah is a product of the political and economic imbalance that has dominated Lebanon since the 1930s, and which climaxed in the mid-1970s when civil war broke out between the country's various ethnic communities. During this period, the Shiite community underwent a social transformation that laid the foundation for the establishment of Hizballah.

In the beginning of the 20th century, the Shiites, the second-largest denomination of Islam, were considered an insignificant and oppressed minority in Lebanon. In the state's ethno-confessional society, the Shiite community, which was in large measure de facto disenfranchised, was despised by the elite Maronite Christians as well as by the Sunni Muslims. Moreover, in a state in which political capital is allocated on the basis of religious sect, the inferiority of the Shiites meant relatively powerless positions.

The division of government positions in Lebanon's confessional political system was determined in the 1943 National Pact, and was based on the population ratios drawn from the 1932 national census. According to the

⁷⁰⁹ Ranstorp, Magnus. *Hizballah in Lebanon: The Politics of the Western Hostage Crisis* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1997), p. x

National Pact, the most powerful political positions of President and Prime Minister were given to the Christians and Sunnis respectively, while the Shiites, who comprised the third largest population at that time, were assigned the position of chairman of parliament.⁷¹⁰ This hierarchical distribution of political positions characterises Lebanon's political system until today, despite the fact that the Shiites have by now become the largest religious sect in the country, outnumbering both Christians and Sunnis.⁷¹¹ This anomaly is the source of discrimination toward the Shiites in Lebanon, expressed not only in political under-representation but also in poverty and social deprivation.

The Shiite Islamic resurgence in Lebanon was inspired by the accelerated modernisation process that swept the country in the early 1960s. Facing the widening socio-economic gaps between the Shiites and other ethnic communities, modernisation stimulated the Shiites' political awareness. Consequently, they began to challenge the traditional political and socio-economic structures, and formed a Shiite council to represent their interests in Lebanon's brutal power game. In 1969 the council elected the Iranian-born Imam Musa al-Sadr as a leader, and he soon became 'the symbol of the new, politically aware Shiite presence in the multi-religious sectarianism of Lebanon.'⁷¹²

Sadr, a charismatic and religiously devoted figure, sought to empower the Shiites and believed that as long they 'could speak through their religion they could overcome their condition.'⁷¹³ In 1974 he established the first Shiite grassroots organisation, known as the "Movement of the Deprived", which was instrumental in mobilising the Shiites to proactive political action. The new organisation was aimed at reforming the traditional political system and

⁷¹⁰ Zisser, Eyal. *Lebanon Blood in the Cedar's* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 2009), pp. 20-66 (Hebrew)

⁷¹¹ Herrera, Ephraim, and Kressel, Gideon. *Jihad: Fundamentals and Fundamentalism* (Tel Aviv: Ministry of Defence Publishing House, 2009), p. 279 (Hebrew)

⁷¹² Hamzeh, Ahmad-Nizar. *In the Path of Hizbullah* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2004), p. 20

⁷¹³ Norton, Augustus. *Hezbollah: A Short History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007), p. 18

seeking social justice. Furthermore, Sadr also propagated the religious notion of martyrdom and change through violent revolution. During a massive political rally in June 1975, he told his supporters: 'military training is a duty like prayer, and bearing arms is a duty as having a Qur'an.'⁷¹⁴

An important manifestation of Sadr's desire to provide the Shiites with means to achieve their political goals was the creation of a military wing, known by its acronym *Amal*, shortly before the outbreak of the Lebanese civil war in 1975.⁷¹⁵ At first *Amal* played a minor role in the fighting, but in time it became a violent armed militia that took an active part in the sectarian hostilities. When Israel invaded South Lebanon in March 1978, Sadr formally declared Israel as an enemy of Lebanon and one of *Amal*'s objectives was to defend Lebanon's sovereignty against Israel's attacks.⁷¹⁶ Sheikh Naim Qassem, Hizballah's Deputy Secretary-General, wrote in his autobiography that it was Sadr who phrased the slogan "Israel is an utter evil" and that he 'never ceased to call for waging war on Israel and freeing the land from its occupation.'⁷¹⁷

On 31st August 1978, on an official visit to Libya to meet with its leader Muammar Gaddafi, Sadr mysteriously disappeared. Since then, he is commonly referred to as the "Vanished Imam" and was elevated to the status of a martyr.⁷¹⁸ Sadr's political directives to his followers, which outline the Shiites' claim to social and political justice, rightful role in the governance of Lebanon and duty to defend the homeland against any external enemies, continue to be faithfully followed by his successors, both in Lebanon and elsewhere in the region.

⁷¹⁴ Alagha, Joseph. *The Shifts in Hizbullah's Ideology* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2006), p. 30

⁷¹⁵ *Amal* is also the Arabic word for "hope".

⁷¹⁶ Shapira, Shimon. *Hizbullah: between Iran and Lebanon* (Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuchad, 2000), pp. 44-45 (Hebrew)

⁷¹⁷ Qassem, Naim. *Hizbullah: The Story from Within* (London: Saqi, 2005), p. 15

⁷¹⁸ The "Vanished Imam" is often a reference to the "Twelfth Imam", a central figure in the Shiite theology who vanished in the 9th century and upon his return he will restore the Shiites to their rightful place in Islam. (Feldman, Noah. "Islam, Terror and the Second Nuclear Age", *The New York Times*, 29/10/2006)

Nonetheless, with Sadr's enigmatic disappearance, the Shiites in Lebanon encountered an identity crisis and there was a risk that they would lose their new political and social status in Lebanon's confessional system. However, the Iranian revolution of 1979 both became a source of sectarian pride and facilitated the entry of a powerful regional actor into Lebanon's internal affairs. These developments enabled the Shiites to rise again, and in the following decades to translate their demographic power into political prominence, and to become the dominant ethnic community in Lebanon.

Political and religious relations between Lebanon and Iran in the early 1970s were maintained by Sadr himself, who had close personal ties to the leaders of the Iranian opposition to the Shah, headed by Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini. The 1979 Iranian revolution instilled new spirit and hope among the Shiites in Lebanon, who felt solidarity and sympathy towards the new regime in Tehran, which in some manner represented their political and social aspirations. Similarly, the new Iranian religious leadership saw in the Lebanese Shiites a prominent sectarian community with a developing political consciousness.

Taking the Shiites under the auspices of the Iranian regime also provided an opportunity to spread the latter's principles beyond its territorial borders, which was one of the principal stated objectives of the Islamic revolution. The Iranian Supreme Leader, Khomeini, strongly believed that he could establish a united global Islamic revolutionary force, while disregarding the religious differences between Sunnis and Shiites. This view provided him with the justification to interfere in the internal affairs of Muslim societies and states. In accordance with his doctrine, Khomeini was keen to export his Islamic beliefs using new state apparatuses.⁷¹⁹ In the summer of 1982, Iran sent thousands of volunteers and advisors, all members of the elite Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC), to Lebanon to bring a new religious and political message to Lebanon's Shiites. Furthermore, Khomeini was interested

⁷¹⁹ Bergman, Ronen. *Point of No Return: Israeli Intelligence against Iran and Hizballah* (Or Yehudah: Kinneret, Zmora-Bitan, Davir Publishing House Ltd., 2007), pp. 97-110 (Hebrew)

in Lebanon since it provided a foothold in the Middle East as well as perceived as a stepping stone to Jerusalem.⁷²⁰

The emergence of the new Iranian regime also split the ranks of Amal. On the one hand, Sadr's successor as the movement's leader, Nabih Berri, supported entering a coalition with Christian and Druze parties and working together to restore Lebanon while diminishing Amal's Islamic tone. On the other hand, Berri's deputy, Hussein al-Musawi, a pro-Iranian cleric who held a more radical stance, rejected any political dialogue and supported the implementation of a more Islamic agenda. Khomeini weighed into this discussion by stating that under Berri's leadership Amal could no longer promote Iran's revolutionary doctrine, and therefore decided to back Musawi. Consequently, Musawi broke away from Amal and established in the summer of 1982 a new Shiite movement, known as the *Islamic Amal*, which would serve as an alternative and be loyal to Khomeini.⁷²¹

Shortly after, Iran took the new movement under its wings. In contrast with the original Amal, whose objective was to change the Shiites social and political status *within* the Lebanese state, the purpose of Islamic Amal under Khomeini's inspiration was to create an Islamic *revolutionary* society in Lebanon that would serve Iranian interests.⁷²² Many of its members were radical clerics, scholars, and volunteers who previously attended Shiite religious *madrasas* in Iran and Iraq. Additionally, Iran granted substantial financial assistance to Shiite centres in Lebanon, to be used for reconstruction and development of civilian infrastructure, religious education system, healthcare and social services. Moreover, the IRGC were responsible for providing military training and indoctrinating the new pro-Iranian militant members, who supported martyrdom and self-sacrifice against the enemies of Islam. Undoubtedly, the Islamic Amal was the framework on which Hizballah

⁷²⁰ Bergman, Ronen. *By Any Means Necessary: Israel's Covert War for its POWs and MIAs* (Or Yehudah: Kinneret, Zmora-Bitan, Davir Publishing House Ltd., 2009), pp. 150-162 (Hebrew)

⁷²¹ Harik, Judith-Palmer. *Hezbollah: The Changing Face of Terrorism* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2007), pp. 7-28

⁷²² Shapira, pp. 98-109

was built, and Iran provided the ideological background that served as the catalyst for the ideology underlying Hizballah.⁷²³

Over its history Hizballah has been remarkably successful in the realm of militant organisations, particularly 'given the short time span and narrow geographic confines' in which it had to operate.⁷²⁴ In its early days, Hizballah encompassed various Islamic-Shiite organisations that recognised Khomeini as their religious and political leader, yet in essence were small groups of devoted clerics without a clear hierarchy and organisational mechanisms. Thanks, however, to Iran's direct military and financial aid as well as religious and ideological guidance, Hizballah's hierarchical and organisational structure became increasingly formalised starting in the summer of 1982. Following a crystallization process it soon became an operational and logistical centre for the Shiite radical movement in Lebanon and provided Iran with an entry-point into the politics of the Levant and Arab-Israeli conflict.⁷²⁵

In June 1982 Israel launched a full-scale invasion of Lebanon, aiming to expel fighters from the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO), who operated in an area of South Lebanon over which they exerted such control that it became known as *Fatah-land*.⁷²⁶ Following the invasion, tens of thousands of Lebanese were killed, injured and displaced. Consequently, an international peacekeeping force landed in Beirut to secure peace in Lebanon and to oversee the withdrawal of PLO fighters and evacuation of Syrian forces.

Although Hizballah's roots predate Israel's invasion, its impact on the organisation's violent ethos cannot be underestimated. The presence of foreign

⁷²³ Azani, Eitan. *Hezbollah: The Story of the Party of God* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), pp. 59-62

⁷²⁴ Kramer, Martin. *Hezbollah's Vision of the West*, Policy Papers No. 16 (Washington DC: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 1989), p. 3

⁷²⁵ Azani, pp. 63-67

⁷²⁶ The term *Fatah-land* refers to an area in South Lebanon that in the 1970s and early 1980s was controlled by the *Fatah* Palestinian terrorist organisation, from which it launched hundreds of rockets onto Israeli civilian centres. The stated objective for Israel's invasion into Lebanon in June 1982, was to push the Palestinian armed forces 40 km to the north outside the rockets' range. (Schiff, Zeev & Yaari, Ehud. *The Lebanon Israel War 1982* (Tel Aviv: Schocken Publishing House Ltd., 1984)

forces on Lebanese soil provided Hizballah with the opportunity to define itself as an Islamic resistance organisation whose primary objective is to wage a Holy War (*Jihad*) against the military "occupation" of Lebanon. Hizballah's bloody history began with a series of suicide attacks against Israeli, American and French military compounds in Lebanon that took place between November 1982 and October 1983, and cost the lives of more than 600 people. Hundreds of attacks followed in subsequent years.

Along with its militant ideology, Hizballah has 'shown an ability to learn from its past experiences and to adapt to the political climate.'⁷²⁷ The death of the Iranian leader Khomeini in June 1989, and specifically the acceptance of the National Reconciliation Accord (also known as the Taif Agreement) that provided the basis for ending the civil war and the return to political normalcy in Lebanon, presented an opportunity for Hizballah to become involved in Lebanon's political system.

In the new political order, Hizballah demonstrated a pragmatic approach and willingness to concede on short-term objectives in order to achieve essential long-term goals. After receiving Iran's approval to participate in the 1992 parliamentary elections, Hizballah succeeded in translating its demographic power into electoral influence, and claimed its appropriate place in Lebanon's political system. Nowadays, Hizballah enjoys substantial popular support and serves as an active member in the Lebanese government with a veto power in the cabinet, and is worthy of the title: 'the most powerful single political movement in Lebanon.'⁷²⁸

⁷²⁷ Jaber, Hala. *Hezbollah: Born with Vengeance* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), p. 71

⁷²⁸ Interview with Daniel Byman, in "Council on Foreign Relations" (29/5/2008); <http://www.cfr.org/publication/16378/hezbollah.html?breadcrumb=%2F> (accessed 12/11/2010)

ORGANISATIONAL FACTORS

ROLE OF VIOLENCE

Violence has played a central role in Lebanon since the breakout of the civil war in 1975. Sectarian attacks resulted in the death of thousands of Christians, Shiites, Sunnis, Druze and Palestinians. However, the establishment of Hizballah in the early 1980s was, undoubtedly, a "tipping point" that accelerated the degree and frequency of resort to violence in Lebanon's political conflict. Hizballah's violence was more skilful, innovative, sophisticated and daring and it changed dramatically the boundaries of asymmetrical warfare, not just in Lebanon but in the entire Middle-East.

Violence has been an integral principle of Hizballah's ideology and strategy for many years. Throughout the years, violent attacks have been carried out by the organisation whose military strength is far greater than any other state and non-state apparatuses in Lebanon. In fact, according to General (ret.) Amos Yadlin, former head of Israel's Military Intelligence, Hizballah's operational capability and weapons arsenal match those of a medium-size state.⁷²⁹ Indeed, alongside using typical terrorist methods, Hizballah maintains 'robust conventional and unconventional military capabilities,' that usually can be found in the hands of a national army. In that sense, it is unique among terrorist organisations, since it controls thousands of long and short-range rockets, land-to-sea anti-ship missiles and a wing of unmanned aerial vehicles.⁷³⁰

Acquiring, maintaining and deploying such military power successfully to achieve political goals by a non-state actor, requires a detailed and coherent

⁷²⁹ Interview with Maj. General (Res.) Amos Yadlin, former head of the Military Intelligence Directorate, Israel Defence Force (IDF), in *Haaretz* daily newspaper (16/5/2008); <http://www.haaretz.co.il/hasite/pages/ShArtPE.jhtml?itemNo=983313&contrassID=2&subContrassID=13&sbSubContrassID=0> (accessed 13/11/2010)

⁷³⁰ Addis, Casey. and Blanchard, Christopher. "Hezbollah: Background and Issues for Congress", *Congressional Research Service*, R41446, 3/1/2011; <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/mideast/R41446.pdf> (accessed 12/11/2011)

ideology, discipline and objectives that would justify the existence and use of such capabilities. Hizballah's Iranian-inspired ideology was first outlined in February 1985 in an open letter to "The Downtrodden in Lebanon and in the World".⁷³¹ Two main religious narratives are dominant in the manifesto: the first is adherence to the message of Islam and subordination to the governance of the supreme jurist (*Wilayat al-faqih*).⁷³² This absolute religious supremacy was supported by Nasrallah in 1987: 'The *faqih* is the guardian...and the extent of his authority is wider than that of any other person...disagreement with him is not permitted.'⁷³³ Ahmad Hamzeh refers to this doctrine as the nerve centre of Hizballah and his quote of Nasrallah (in a 1997 speech in Beirut) signifies the magnitude of Islamic rule to the organisation's political and religious functions: 'the spinal cord of Hizballah is *wilayat al-faqih*. Take out *wilayat al-faqih* and Hizballah becomes a dead body.'⁷³⁴

The second narrative is the obligation to carry out a violent *Jihad* against occupation forces, specifically Israel and the US. The strategy of *Jihad* is adamantly portrayed by Hizballah as a necessity to fight against oppressors and the injustice of the strong, as articulately explained by the organisation's spiritual leader, Mohammed Hussein Fadlallah: 'We are not advocating violence because we like to kill people. When other people impose violence, when they occupy my country, I have to use violence to fight violence.'⁷³⁵ In the case of Hizballah, violence is justified by an ideology that represents a shift from the traditional Shiite passive attitude towards activism against the enemies of Islam. Furthermore, religious principles, such as martyrdom, serve to legitimise Hizballah's violence against external enemies, as stated clearly in the 1985 manifesto:

⁷³¹ The full text of the 1985 open-letter can be found at:

http://web.archive.org/web/20060821215729/http://www.ict.org.il/Articles/Hiz_letter.htm

⁷³² *Wilayat al-faqih* is an Islamic belief system that refers to the rule of the religious jurist. This doctrine of religious supremacy was developed and distributed by the Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Khomeini.

⁷³³ Kramer, p. 10

⁷³⁴ Hamzeh, p. 36

⁷³⁵ Cited in Phillips, pp. 42-43

We have no alternative but to confront aggression by sacrifice...[Our people] decided to oppose infidelity – be it French, American or Israeli – by striking at their headquarters and launching a veritable war of resistance against the Occupation forces.'⁷³⁶

The ideological imperative of resistance is paramount in Hizballah's discourse and often used to provide violence with more positive and legitimate connotations. In November 2009, Hizballah released its new ideological platform in which armed resistance is portrayed as a national necessity and linked to military power intended to fight against occupiers.⁷³⁷ Although, observers may argue that the new manifesto represents Hizballah's moderation stemming from its integration into the Lebanese political system, Benedetta Berti points out that the strong Islamic identity and the radical attitude and opposition to Israel remained unaltered.⁷³⁸ However, Nicholas Blanford, a prominent Beirut-based correspondent, argues that although resistance remains a top priority, the manifesto does omit references to an Islamic state in Lebanon and clearly states that consensual democracy is the fundamental basis for governance. In his view, the updated manifesto is an 'exercise in pragmatism and tact in which Hizballah's unyielding worldview was tailored to conform to the prevailing political reality in Lebanon.'⁷³⁹

On a broader level, Hizballah's violence is justified regardless of whether the victim is a combatant or a civilian as long as it is a member of an occupying force, and especially when it is carried out against Israeli targets. According to Nasrallah 'there is no difference between a[n Israeli] soldier and a[n Israeli] civilian, for they are all invaders, occupiers and usurpers of the land.'⁷⁴⁰

⁷³⁶ Quoted in Hizballah's 1985 open-letter.

⁷³⁷ The full text of the 2009 new political manifesto can be found at; <http://sns.sy/sns/?path=news/read/7187> (accessed 14/11/2010)

⁷³⁸ Berti, Benedetta. "The "Rebirth" of Hizbollah: Analyzing the 2009 Manifesto", *Strategic Assessment* (12:4, February 2010), pp. 91-100

⁷³⁹ Blanford, Nicholas. *Warriors of God: Inside Hezbollah's Thirty-Year Struggle against Israel* (New York: Random House, 2011), p. 479

⁷⁴⁰ Shatz, Adam. "In Search of Hezbollah", *The New York Review of Books* (51:7, 29/4/2004); <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/archives/2004/apr/29/in-search-of-hezbollah/> (accessed 14/2/2011)

However, when carrying out suicide attacks, Hizballah demonstrated a more pragmatic approach distinguishing between military personnel and civilians; while the first is considered a legitimate target, the latter is largely regarded as unjustified. Accordingly, its view of suicide attacks is more reserved and consequently the organisation carried out relatively few suicide attacks, when compared to Palestinian and other Jihadist terrorist organisations.⁷⁴¹ Although between 1982 and 1994 Hizballah carried out dozen of suicide attacks against Israeli, American and French military targets on Lebanese soil, it refrained from deliberately targeting civilians.

Yet, on at least two occasions Hizballah deviated from its policy and intentionally attacked civilians outside of Lebanon. In March 1992, Hizballah's operations commander, Imad Mughniyah, masterminded the suicide bombing of the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires, killing 29 civilians and injuring more than 250.⁷⁴² Again, in July 2012 a Hizballah cell in Bulgaria carried out a suicide attack against a bus carrying Israeli tourists in the city of Burgas, killing 5 people and injuring more than 30.⁷⁴³ Both attacks can be explained as retaliatory actions for Israel's military escalations. While the first was a response to the 1992 assassination of Hizballah's Secretary-General Abbas al-Musawi, the second was a long-overdue revenge for the assassination of Mughniyah himself in Damascus in February 2008.

Clearly, Hizballah realised that the virtue of martyrdom is instrumental in evoking fear among the nations it regarded as "oppressors", and therefore was the pioneer in using this *modus operandi* in the Middle East. To a large extent, Hizballah's attacks against the Multi-National Force in Lebanon and the subsequent heavy casualties were the catalyst for the decision to evacuate American and French troops from Lebanon in early 1984. Daniel Byman argues

⁷⁴¹ Shay, Shaul. *The Axis of Evil: Iran, Hizballah and the Palestinian Terror* (Herzliya: IDC Press, 2003), p. 94 (Hebrew)

⁷⁴² Bergman, Ronen. *Point of No Return: Israeli Intelligence against Iran and Hizballah*, pp. 212-222

⁷⁴³ "Bulgaria blast: 'Suicide bomber' killed Israelis", *BBC News website* (19/7/2012); <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-18897772> (accessed 15/9/12)

that other terrorist organisations, such as al-Qaeda, learned from Hizballah's experience that a 'dramatic strike against US forces and facilities would lead the United States to withdraw military forces from the Middle East.'⁷⁴⁴ Evidently, the suicide attacks that were executed by Hizballah's terrorists are still embedded in the hearts and minds of Israelis, Americans and Europeans and are used to reinforce its deterrence capability.

Another form of terrorism carried out by Hizballah was hostage-taking, which was prevalent in Lebanon in the 1980s and early 1990s. This campaign included abduction of foreign nationals, most of whom civilians, residing or stationed in Lebanon, and also the hijacking of a TWA airliner in June 1985. Although Hizballah denied responsibility for the hostage-taking campaign, Ranstorp argues that the organisation is 'undisputedly responsible for the hostage-crisis in Lebanon, despite its attempts to shield its complicity through the employment of cover-names.'⁷⁴⁵

Hizballah is also infamous for deliberately using indiscriminate rocket attacks against Israeli civilian population; acts that were described by Amnesty International as war crimes and serious violations of international humanitarian law.⁷⁴⁶ Hizballah first used this method in 1992, as another response for the assassination of its leader by an Israeli helicopter gunship. Since then, this tactic served Hizballah in two military conflicts with Israel in 1993 and 1996, and most recently in the 2006 Second Lebanon War, during which it launched more than 4,000 rockets killing 42 civilians and injuring more than 4,500.⁷⁴⁷

⁷⁴⁴ Byman, Daniel. *A High Price: The Triumphs and failures of Israeli Counterterrorism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 210

⁷⁴⁵ Ranstorp, *Hizballah in Lebanon*, p. 108

⁷⁴⁶ Amnesty International, *Israel/Lebanon: Hizbullah's attacks on Northern Israel*, report no. MDE 02/025/2006 (September 2006), p.8; <http://www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/MDE02/025/2006/en/8b297b53-d3f6-11dd-8743-d305bea2b2c7/mde020252006en.pdf> (accessed 13/4/2011)

⁷⁴⁷ Data taken from the Israeli Medical Association website (Hebrew); <http://www.ima.org.il/MainSite/ViewCategory.aspx?CategoryId=1690> (accessed 19/11/10)

Since the 2006 war, Hizballah has undertaken a substantial military build-up, and it is currently believed to stockpile more than 40,000 rockets covering entirely Israel's territory.⁷⁴⁸ Former American Defence Secretary, Robert Gates, warned in April 2010 that 'Hizballah has far more rockets and missiles than most governments in the world, and this is obviously destabilising for the whole region.'⁷⁴⁹ Gates' warning followed Israeli and American claims that Hizballah received from Syria Scud tactical ballistic missiles, with increased range and warhead and improved guidance system and accuracy (See figure 4 for Hizballah's missiles and rockets arsenal).⁷⁵⁰ More recently, Hizballah admitted that it was behind the drone that flew over Israel in October 2012 and was eventually shot down. Nasrallah rightly stated that 'possession of such an aerial capacity is a first in the history of any resistance movement in Lebanon and the region.'⁷⁵¹

System	Type	Range (km)	Warhead Weight (kg)	Supplier
Zelzal-2	Rocket	210	600	Iran
Nazeat-6/10	Rocket	100-140	130/230	Iran
Fajr-3	Rocket	43	45	Iran
Fajr-5	Rocket	75	90	Iran
302 mm	Rocket	75	100	Syria
220 mm	Rocket	70	Unknown	Syria
122 mm	Rocket	20-40	30	Iran/Syria
107 mm	Rocket	6	Unknown	Iran/Syria
M600/Fateh-110	Missile	210-250	500	Iran/Syria
Scud variant	Missile	300-700	985	Syria

Source: White, Jeffrey. *If War Comes: Israel vs. Hizballah and Its Allies*, Policy Focus 106 (Washington DC: The Washington Institute for Near East Policy, September 2010)

Figure 4: Reported Hizballah rockets and missiles

⁷⁴⁸ "Hezbollah Stockpiles 40,000 Rockets near Israel Border", *The Sunday Times* (5/8/2009); http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/middle_east/article6739175.ece (accessed 19/11/10)

⁷⁴⁹ "Hezbollah Armed with Improved Missiles", *BBC News* (28/4/2010); <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/8647909.stm> (accessed 19/11/10)

⁷⁵⁰ "Syria Gave Scuds to Hezbollah, U.S. Says", *The Wall Street Journal* (14/4/2010); <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052702304604204575182290135333282.html> (accessed 19/11/10)

⁷⁵¹ "Hezbollah admits launching drone over Israel", *BBC News* (11/10/12); <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-19914441> (accessed 31/10/12)

Despite the unprecedented firepower in the hands of Hizballah, there are hardly any known incidents of unauthorised attacks. The organisation has put in place impressive command and control mechanisms, which ensure strict obedience and allow little room for errors. As a quasi-military organisation, Hizballah maintains a rigid hierarchy and it is governed by a structured, centralised and accountable political-religious leadership. Every member is assigned to a designated unit, tasked with a specific duty and receives clear instructions as to when and whom he is supposed to report. New members undergo field training, usually in Lebanon but at times also in Iran or Syria, and after serving in the ranks they are divided to reserve units that can be drafted in emergency situations.⁷⁵² Blanford adds that self-discipline and obedience together with religious and ideological values create a well-trained and motivated fighter who is, in Hizballah's eyes, far superior to his Israeli enemy.⁷⁵³

Interestingly, Hizballah does show some remorse and offers condolences when it serves its interests or jeopardises those of Lebanon or its Iranian and Syrian patrons. After a Hizballah rocket attack killed two Arab-Israeli children during the Second Lebanon War, Nasrallah accepted responsibility, apologised to the family and stated that he considered the fallen children to be 'martyrs for Palestine and martyrs for the nation.'⁷⁵⁴ Also, when confronted with the claims that the kidnapping of the two Israeli soldiers led to the outbreak of the 2006 war, that cost the lives of more than 1,000 Lebanese and devastated the nation's infrastructure, Nasrallah candidly responded: 'We did not have a one percent probability that the capturing operation would have led to a war on this scale,' and added that he would not have ordered the attack 'for humanitarian, moral, social, security, military and political reasons.'⁷⁵⁵

⁷⁵² Ranstorp, *Hizbollah's Command Leadership*, pp. 303-339

⁷⁵³ Blanford, pp. 111-122

⁷⁵⁴ "Hezbollah leader apologizes for attack's child victims", *CNN Website* (20/7/2006); http://articles.cnn.com/2006-07-20/world/nasrallah.interview_1_sheik-hassan-nasrallah-al-manar-television-station-hezbollah-leader?_s=PM:WORLD (accessed: 14/2/2012)

⁷⁵⁵ Noe, pp. 393-394

This behaviour stands as a stark contrast to Hizballah's radical image and is often under-appreciated when examining Hizballah's more pragmatic tone after the 2006 war.

PERCEPTION OF THE OPPONENT

Since its establishment in 1982, Hizballah has been using an aggressive approach against its political rivals in the domestic, regional and international arenas. Internal clashes with political adversaries, military campaigns against Israel, and pin-point operations combined with radical rhetoric against western countries, prove that Hizballah is determined to carry out its ideological objectives on all fronts. Yet, Hizballah mainly focuses on two arch-enemies – Israel and the US – which are respectively branded the Little and Great Devil.

It seems that the immutable enemy that defines Hizballah the most and provides legitimacy for its existence as an armed organisation is Israel, which is a target for a multifaceted effort aimed at promoting the organisation as the leading non-state actor in the Middle-East. Ideologically, Israel is consistently portrayed as the archenemy 'that must be fought until the hated ones get what they deserve,' and considered as 'the greatest danger to our future generations and to the destiny of our lands.'⁷⁵⁶ Several months after the publication of the 1985 "open letter", Sheikh Fadlallah outlined Hizballah's attitude towards Israel:

Israel cannot be viewed as a state with the right for security and peace just like any other state in the region. We cannot see Israel as a legal presence, considering that it is a conglomeration of people who came from all parts of the world to live in Palestine on the ruins of another people.⁷⁵⁷

This imperative sets the tone to the inflammatory discourse that urges Hizballah members to take up arms. In a 1998 televised rally in Beirut,

⁷⁵⁶ Quoted in Hizballah's 1985 open letter.

⁷⁵⁷ Jaber, p. 60

Nasrallah said that the tragic, painful and bitter event of the Muslim nation is 'the establishment of the state of the Zionist Jews, the descendants of apes and pigs,' who through their fanaticism 'are celebrating their victory over the nation of 1.4 billion Muslims.'⁷⁵⁸ Ascribing to Israel imperialist motives and aspirations to expand the territory under its control beyond its borders is another narrative repeatedly used in Hizballah's rhetoric. In the same speech, Nasrallah referred to Israel as an 'entity without borders' that equals a 'cancerous growth and harmful microbe.'⁷⁵⁹

In accordance with this ideological indoctrination, Hizballah objects to any political settlement with Israel. The organisation perceives negotiations with Israel as an impure act that borders on blasphemy.⁷⁶⁰ In accordance with this view, Hizballah opposes any peaceful agreement, regards Israel as an occupier of Palestinian lands and refuses to recognise Israel's right to exist. When asked by a journalist from the Egyptian newspaper *Al-Ahram* (in February 2000) about the prospects of a future compromise with Israel, Nasrallah replied that 'Israel will remain, in our minds and plans, an illegitimate, illegal, aberrant, and cancerous entity, which we therefore cannot recognise.'⁷⁶¹ A few months later Nasrallah admitted that Hizballah's objective is the destruction of Israel and the liberation of Palestine. He claimed that 'Israel is the root of all the crises and wars and cannot be a factor in bringing about a true and just peace in this region.'⁷⁶²

Most surprisingly, despite the anti-Israel ideology and discourse, on the issue of honouring the dead Hizballah praises Israel. In January 2004, Nasrallah spoke about Israel's savagery and barbarism, yet he acknowledged that the way it treats dead soldiers and their bodies and its readiness to pay the price to recover them is worthy of Hizballah's respect.⁷⁶³ Nevertheless, the humanistic

⁷⁵⁸ Noe, p. 188

⁷⁵⁹ Ibid, p. 189

⁷⁶⁰ Herrera and Kressel, p. 278

⁷⁶¹ Noe, p. 221

⁷⁶² Zisser, Eyal. "The Return of Hizbullah", *Middle East Quarterly* (9:4, Fall 2002), p. 11

⁷⁶³ Noe, p. 302

perception does not extend beyond words and despite the implicit optimism, as several observers have tried to suggest, Hizballah remains committed to undermine the legitimacy of Israel's existence.

Moreover, Hizballah directly links Israel's regional supremacy to its strategic relations with the US, and specifically the political, financial and military support that it provides to the Jewish state. As such, the organisation follows the belief that 'Israel exists to execute American policy and that US foreign policy in the Middle East is often undertaken with Israel's prime interests in mind.'⁷⁶⁴ In Hizballah's view, the US is also the main impediment to Israel's defeat. In his elegy for Musawi in February 1992, Nasrallah blamed the US for 'Israel's massacres and all the destruction, murder, and displacement it wreaks,' and determined that Israel 'would not have been able to stand on its own in the region had it not been for Western and American support.'⁷⁶⁵ Furthermore, Sheikh Qassem firmly argues that the American foreign policy is dedicated to terminate Hizballah, by supplying Israel with advanced weapons to be used against it as well as intervening in Lebanon's political life and pressuring some factions to act aggressively against the leading Shiite political party.⁷⁶⁶

Yet, even without the American commitment to Israel's security, the US would have been regarded as the Western nemesis of Hizballah, mainly due to its super-power status and global interests in the Middle East. The US is perceived by Hizballah as 'an arrogant power possessing a clear plan of action for oppressing and subordinating the region's peoples,' and regarded as 'the cause of all our catastrophes and source of all malice.'⁷⁶⁷ Direct American military involvement in the Middle East, specifically in Lebanon in the early 1980s, in the Persian Gulf in the 1990s and 2000s and in Afghanistan since 2001 until today, reinforced Hizballah's outlook towards the US as the source of

⁷⁶⁴ Jaber, p. 57

⁷⁶⁵ Noe, p. 53

⁷⁶⁶ Qassem, pp. 245-251

⁷⁶⁷ Kramer, p. 45

all evils in the region. Consequently, Hizballah has been a fierce opponent of the American military and political involvement in the Middle East. The organisation's opposition to the US is evident in Nasrallah's words from March 2003: 'Death to America is not a slogan. For us, death to America is a policy, a strategy, and a vision.'⁷⁶⁸

Hizballah also believes that the American policies in the Middle East, and particularly the attempts to enforce democracy by military means, corrupt Muslims of the region and contradict Islamic principles. In April 2003, a month after the American invasion of Iraq, Nasrallah predicted that 'the continuation of American policy will make enemies of all Arabs and Muslims around the world. Lots of groups will surface, not necessarily al-Qaeda, and they will be impossible to bring to justice.'⁷⁶⁹

Despite its position in the Lebanese government, which would be thought to entail behavior consistent with Lebanon's foreign and domestic policies that are generally favorable towards the United States, Hizballah remains committed to its radical views of Israel and the US. Although it recognised that in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, there is a new reality that poses significant obstacles to resistance organisations in the Middle East, Hizballah continues to advocate violence and hatred towards the west.⁷⁷⁰ It seems that although the pragmatism that Hizballah has been gradually displaying since it first entered politics, incitement and radical perceptions continue to be instrumental for maintaining the support of Lebanese Shiites as well as the sponsorship of Iran and Syria.

SPLIT IN THE RANKS

⁷⁶⁸ "Hezbollah's Global Reach", Joint Hearing before the Subcommittee on International Terrorism and Nonproliferation, of the Committee on International Relations, *US House of Representatives* (2nd Session, No. 109-233, 28/9/2006), p. 1

⁷⁶⁹ Noe, p. 293

⁷⁷⁰ Sobelman, Daniel. "New rules of the game: Israel and the Hizballah after the withdrawal", Memorandum 65, *Jaffe Center for Strategic Studies* (June 2003), pp. 53-54 (Hebrew)

Like many other terrorist organisations, Hizballah is also an offshoot of a bigger and more institutionalised grassroots movement. Although in its early days, the Amal movement, the largest Shiite-Lebanese organisation at that time, failed to significantly impact the lives of its constituency and 'was fading into obscurity after the eruption of the civil war,' it ultimately came to prominence due to the 'intense Shiite outcry after al-Sadr's enigmatic disappearance.'⁷⁷¹ Israel's first invasion into Lebanon in 1978 also contributed greatly to Amal's political awakening, and afterwards it had become an established political organisation with an Islamic character and enjoyed substantial popular support.

However, after al-Sadr's vanishing, a secular leadership, headed by Nabih Berri, took control of the movement and decided to 'cease resisting the Israeli advance and join a "National Salvation" government grouping representatives of most political parties and sects.'⁷⁷² Berri's leadership disenchanted many local Shiite leaders and Amal members, amongst them were Hassan Nasrallah and Naim Qassem. They supported an aggressive response to Israel's incursions, and decided to break away from Amal and subsequently formed Hizballah.⁷⁷³ In a 1993 interview Nasrallah outlined the circumstances under which he decided to leave Amal and to join the nucleolus of Hizballah founders:

The way Amal dealt with the invasion [of Israel in 1982] gave rise to several internal problems...at the same time, we were very politically involved in thinking about the need for military operations against the occupation. This was when we decided to leave Amal...at least as far as we were concerned, the Movement was no longer up to the task required...and we were seeking an alternative that would allow us to operate the way we wanted.⁷⁷⁴

Subhi al-Tufeili, Hizballah's first Secretary-general, expressed in 1989 the conflicting viewpoints between the two organisation: Hizballah carried out

⁷⁷¹ Norton, pp. 21-22

⁷⁷² Noe, p. 5

⁷⁷³ Jaber, pp. 20-48

⁷⁷⁴ Noe, p. 125

operations against Israel to liberate Palestine, while Amal adopted a passive policy towards Palestine; Hizballah rejected any reconciliation with Israel, whereas Amal supported coexistence with it; Hizballah wished to end the existing leadership structure, as Amal opted to cooperate with the Lebanese government.⁷⁷⁵

Hizballah's rapid growth threatened Amal's position as the preeminent representative of the Shiites in Lebanon, and brought the two organisations into conflict. Similar to other cases of organisational splits, Amal and Hizballah were competing for the resources and loyalty of the Shiite constituency, and therefore it quickly developed into a fierce intra-communal dispute that resulted in bloody battles between 1982 and 1990.⁷⁷⁶ In the duel between the two central movements of the Shiite community, Hizballah had the upper hand and began its ascendancy towards becoming a significant military and political power. Amal suffered heavy losses not only on the battlefield, but its status was lowered 'in the eyes of both the [Shiite] community and the powers active in Lebanon,' which in turn 'led to the further erosion of its power and internal unity.'⁷⁷⁷

Nonetheless, the rivalry between Hizballah and Amal was atypical in at least one important aspect – the involvement of other states in the contest for Shiite hegemony in Lebanon. Hala Jaber argues that the local conflict 'became a reflection of a power-struggle between Tehran and Damascus for domination in Lebanon.'⁷⁷⁸ While Iran backed Hizballah, Syria sponsored Amal and both states went to great lengths to defend their protégés. The violence was enhanced dramatically by the influx of weapons that Iran provided to Hizballah and Syria to Amal. However, the small-scale war between the two rival movements, which was just another front in the full-scale civil war ongoing at the time, caused great concern in Iran and Syria. Fearing that their interests in Lebanon

⁷⁷⁵ Azani, p. 77

⁷⁷⁶ Shanahan, Rodger. "Hizballah Rising: The Political Battle for the Loyalty of the Shi'a of Lebanon", *Middle East Review of International Affairs* (9:1, March 2005), pp. 1-6

⁷⁷⁷ Azani, p. 76

⁷⁷⁸ Jaber, pp. 31-32

would be severely damaged if the conflict was prolonged, the two states took steps to restore order and security.⁷⁷⁹ In 1989 they brokered the Ta'if Agreement, which was aimed at ending the internal war and disarming the militias, and pressured both Hizballah and Amal to sign it.

Before the implementation of the Ta'if Agreement began, it was clear that Amal lost its military foothold in Lebanon and its popular support decreased significantly. Augustus Norton, a renowned Hizballah expert, argues that the Shiites 'grew sceptical of the Amal movement and its corruption, and came to admire Hizballah's relative integrity.'⁷⁸⁰ Although Hizballah was among the victorious side, it also faced a growing concern: the accords stripped the legitimacy of its military wing and called for its termination.

However, Hizballah interpreted the agreement differently and viewed resistance activities against Israel as legal. Thus, it adamantly argued that its weapons were intended for use strictly against Israel, therefore entitling it to keep them. Unlike Hizballah, Amal saw in the agreement the opportunity to disarm its weapons and to integrate into Lebanon's new political system and the Lebanese army.⁷⁸¹ Since Amal's disarmament it has become a political ally of Hizballah in the Lebanese government, and both organisations represent the Shiite community in the "March 8 Alliance", which was the ruling coalition in Lebanon's political system from June 2011 until March 2013.

Although Hizballah has been operational for three decades, and became a recognised political party, an internal split that characterises other cases of terrorist organisations that abandoned violence and opted for peaceful means, failed to take place. Perhaps organisational disagreements over ideology and strategy do exist nowadays, but it seems that the current leadership is capable of preventing them from surfacing. Should the unified front towards the outside world be breached, it could be a significant development indicating that

⁷⁷⁹ Kramer, Martin. "Sacrifice and 'Self-Martyrdom' in Shi'ite Lebanon", *Terrorism and Political Violence* (3:3, 1991), pp. 30-47

⁷⁸⁰ Norton, p. 45

⁷⁸¹ Azani, p. 82

Hizballah is on a course to becoming a full-fledged political party without a separate armed wing.

It is important to note the only time that internal differences threatened to split Hizballah. The catalyst was the initial decision to participate in the political system through elections in 1992. On one hand, the hard-liners led by Secretary-General, Sheikh Subhi al-Tufeili opposed the decision to participate in the elections, arguing that 'extreme radicalism and total secrecy were vital for its [Hizballah's] survival.'⁷⁸² Furthermore, they argued that taking part in the elections would legitimise the non-Islamic Lebanese government and that the legacy of Supreme Leader Khomeini must be preserved.⁷⁸³

On the other hand, Hizballah's spiritual leader, Sheikh Fadlallah, advocated in favour of participating in Lebanon's politics, explaining that it served an Islamic interest whilst not harming the resistance operations. In the ensuing vocal struggle over ideology and strategy, Fadlallah defeated Tufeili, who was first isolated then expelled from Hizballah and replaced by Abbas al-Musawi at the organisation's helms.⁷⁸⁴

It seems that the internal feud threatened to tear apart Hizballah and weaken its political and popular strongholds. Learning from its mistakes, the organisation became strict about playing down and resolving internal differences whilst presenting to the wider population a cohesive and consistent agenda that is expressed exclusively by Hizballah's Secretary-General.

LEVEL OF PUBLIC SUPPORT

Undoubtedly, one of Hizballah's greatest achievements is its ability to maintain an overwhelming and continuous public support, not only among its natural Shiite constituency, but also among other potentially rival sectarian

⁷⁸² Jaber, p. 72

⁷⁸³ Blanford, p. 100

⁷⁸⁴ Azani, pp. 105-110

groups in Lebanon. Simon Haddad explains this anomaly by the fact that Hizballah has proved that its 'agenda does not exclusively rest on political violence and warfare but retains a political and social dimension to its activities in post-war Lebanon.'⁷⁸⁵ Indeed, Hizballah masterfully utilises its broad popularity to achieve political power, which makes it today the most significant and influential actor in Lebanon. The electoral success of the organisation stems primarily from its policy of promoting resistance operations while downplaying its pan-Islamic ideology, which has enabled it to establish a legitimate political voice.⁷⁸⁶

Like other Islamist terrorist organisations, some of Hizballah's operatives and supporters come from low socio-economic classes. However, the bulk of its membership comes from educated and secular backgrounds. Norton explains this unusual phenomenon by the fact that Hizballah's 'social base is not exclusively the monopoly of the poor but some of the party's operatives are middle class or even affluent.'⁷⁸⁷ The broad-based popular support stems from a combination of two principal elements: the group's social and welfare projects (*Da'wa*) aimed at assisting the downtrodden regardless of their religious denomination, and Hizballah's self-proclaimed role as the protector of Lebanese sovereignty against Israeli aggression. The successful convergence of the two elements is the fundamental pillar in Hizballah's political campaigns since 1992.⁷⁸⁸

Following the decision to participate in national politics, Hizballah allotted vast resources to promote both its resistance and social activities. The organisation viewed politics as means to grow and expand its stability, autonomy and power. By creating a political wing, Hizballah was granted a legal

⁷⁸⁵ Haddad, Simon. "The Origins of Popular Support for Lebanon's Hezbollah", *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* (29:1, 2006), p. 21

⁷⁸⁶ Azani, p. 105

⁷⁸⁷ Cited in Haddad, p. 22

⁷⁸⁸ Flanigan, T. Shawn. "Nonprofit Service Provision by Insurgent Organizations: The Cases of Hizballah and the Tamil Tigers", *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* (31:6, 2008), pp. 499-519

platform to translate its public support into political power.⁷⁸⁹ Evidently, Hizballah's first encounter with the political domain in the 1992 parliamentary elections was a remarkable success. Since then, it has enjoyed a trend of constantly increasing popular support that eventually culminated in a Hizballah candidate – Najib Mikati – being elected as the head of Lebanese government in June 2011.⁷⁹⁰

To a large extent, Hizballah owes its popularity to several factors. First and foremost is its leader over the last two decades, Hassan Nasrallah. He is perceived by many Muslims worldwide as a 'shrewd militia leader and political strategist', who was able to lead an armed campaign that ultimately resulted in Israel's withdrawal from south Lebanon.⁷⁹¹ In a 2006 public poll conducted by the Egyptian Quranic Center, Nasrallah was ranked at the top among Middle-Eastern leaders (with 82% approval rating), while Osama Bin-Laden trailed behind with 52%.⁷⁹² Under his leadership, Hizballah capitalised on its military triumph to become Lebanon's protector, and Nasrallah himself has been regarded as one of the most prominent figures in Lebanon.

Aside from Nasrallah's charisma and leadership abilities, Hizballah also skillfully uses the power of media to capture, attract and influence public opinion. To this end, it maintains a range of autonomous communication outlets to convey its messages to different audiences, from internet websites and newspapers to radio and a television stations.

One of the main instruments in Hizballah's media arsenal is the television station *al-Manar* (Beacon in Arabic), which is often regarded as the 'jewel in Hizballah's media crown.'⁷⁹³ It is one of the most widely viewed

⁷⁸⁹ Berti, "Armed Groups as Political Parties and Their Role in Electoral Politics: The Case of Hizballah", pp. 942-962

⁷⁹⁰ Azani, Eitan. "Hezbollah's Strategy of "Walking on the Edge": Between Political Game and Political Violence", *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* (35:11, 2012), pp. 741-759

⁷⁹¹ Shatz, *In Search of Hezbollah*

⁷⁹² Elbaz, Amr. "Hassan Nasrallah Tops Poll", *Ahl Al-Quran – International Quranic Center*: http://www.ahl-alquran.com/English/show_article.php?main_id=356 (accessed 15/9/12)

⁷⁹³ Schleifer, Ron. "Psychological Operations: A New Variation on an Age Old Art: Hezbollah versus Israel", *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* (29:1, 2006), p. 13

satellite stations in the Arab world, and its 'stance can be interpreted as the frames or messages of a social movement, geared to encourage attitudes which spur action and involvement.'⁷⁹⁴ Al-Manar is funded by Hizballah, operating in its service and is committed to promote its objectives as well as political and social agendas. A study of its broadcasting content determines that from its establishment in 1991 until the Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon in 2000, 'the bulk of the station's programming was aimed at sustaining and, if possible, strengthening the Lebanese public's support for Hizballah's campaign of resistance against the IDF in south Lebanon.'⁷⁹⁵

Furthermore, al-Manar is widely considered a tool used by Hizballah for psychological warfare aimed at 'pressuring Israeli viewers to push their government for a unilateral withdrawal,' and from September 2000 onwards to support the Palestinian armed resistance in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (also known as the *Second Intifada*).⁷⁹⁶ For these reasons, the station was proscribed by the American Treasury Department in March 2006 as a "Specially Designated Global Terrorist Entity", and therefore is subject to US sanctions. According to the economic and trade policies, al-Manar is subject to sanctions because 'any entity maintained by a terrorist group whether masquerading as a charity, a business, or a media outlet is as culpable as the terrorist group itself.'⁷⁹⁷ Many European countries followed the American sanctions and banned al-Manar's broadcasts, accusing the station of programming content that could incite hatred and violence.

The last driving force that brings Hizballah worldwide admiration and support is its public backing and assistance to the Palestinian struggle for

⁷⁹⁴ Baylouny, A. Marie. *Al-Manar and Alhurra: Competing Satellite Stations and Ideologies*, CSRC Discussion Paper 05/49 (September 2005), p. 2

⁷⁹⁵ Conway, Maura. "Terror TV? An Exploration of Hizballah's Al-Manar Television", Working Paper No. 10, *Centre for International Studies*, Dublin City University (2008), p. 20

⁷⁹⁶ Conway, Maura. "Terrorism and the Making of the 'New Middle East': New Media Strategies of Hizballah and al Qaeda", Working Paper No. 7, *Centre for International Studies*, Dublin City University (2008)

⁷⁹⁷ "U.S. Designates Al-Manar as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist Entity Television Station is Arm of Hizballah Terrorist Network", 23/3/2006; <http://www.treasury.gov/press-center/press-releases/Pages/js4134.aspx> (accessed 13/3/2011)

independence, which is perceived by many Muslims and non-Muslims as a just cause. In September 2000, a week after the hostilities began in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, Nasrallah said in an interview that Hizballah is:

Committed to supporting this [Palestinian] intifada and standing side by side with the Palestinian people...we have a moral, humanitarian, religious, patriotic, and national duty towards this people, and believe it is our collective duty to stand by its side.⁷⁹⁸

Hizballah has consistently shown solidarity with the Palestinian armed campaign, and at times also praised the use of suicide terrorism against Israelis. Nasrallah's deputy, Naim Qassem, claimed that 'the weapon of martyrdom is the main and pivotal weapon on which we can rely, one that has proven its effectiveness and that prompts the enemy to reconsider its objectives.'⁷⁹⁹

Undoubtedly, Hizballah benefited from its uncompromising support of the Palestinians. Indeed, by collecting money for the Palestinians and supplying weapons to their armed groups, Hizballah was able to attract many Sunnis in Lebanon and reinforce its consensus as a legitimate political actor. However, Hizballah's active involvement in the Palestinian conflict with Israel had other objectives rather than only mobilising public support. David Hirst claims that Hizballah's support of the Palestinians was also intended to project the organisation 'as the spearhead of the whole Arab/Muslim struggle against the historic Zionist foe.'⁸⁰⁰ Furthermore, promotion of the Palestinian agenda served as a powerful instrument in Hizballah's ability to continue the conflict against Israel while limiting the risks to itself and to its patrons. Byman cynically notes that Hizballah's support energised the Palestinians, and enabled it 'to fight to the last Palestinian and suffer few costs of its own.'⁸⁰¹

⁷⁹⁸ Noe, p. 250

⁷⁹⁹ Qassem, p. 49

⁸⁰⁰ Hirst, David. *Beware of Small States: Lebanon, Battleground of the Middle East* (London: Faber and Faber Ltd., 2010), p. 273

⁸⁰¹ Byman, *A High Price: The Triumphs and failures of Israeli Counterterrorism*, p. 246

DOMESTIC FACTORS

Israel's security strategy is mainly derived from its inferiority in population and territorial size compared with its Arab neighbours. Therefore, the principal pillar of its national security doctrine is deterrence, which is aimed at avoiding military conflicts. However, if an armed conflict is forced upon it, the Israel Defence Force (IDF) is expected to strike a massive and decisive attack, preferably while carrying the war to the enemy's territory, as quickly as possible.⁸⁰²

Often, Israel is praised for its military triumphs since 1948, both against Arab states and Palestinian terrorist groups. However, it seems that Israel's military confrontation with Hizballah stands out as mostly inconclusive as to which side has the upper hand. Byman argues that Israel largely failed in dealing with Hizballah and that 'the Lebanese group has won both military and especially political victories, and today is more formidable than ever.'⁸⁰³ This notion is popular among Israeli public opinion who perceives Hizballah as the leading protagonist in making Lebanon 'Israel's very own Vietnam.'⁸⁰⁴

The primary reason why the conflict with Hizballah did not end with a clear-cut military victory on Israel's part is the inability of its government and military to articulate attainable goals and strategies for dealing with the Shiite organisation. To understand this incoherence, it is necessary to divide Israel's security objectives and actions in Lebanon into three distinct time-periods: the first starts in 1982 with the Israeli invasion of Lebanon and the establishment of the "Security Zone" and ends in the 1999 parliamentary elections, during which the conflict intensified and the "rules of the game" were settled; the second begins with Israel's unilateral withdraw in 2000 and ends on the eve of the Second Lebanon War in July 2006, during which Israel mistakenly believed

⁸⁰² Steinberg, Gerald. "Re-examining Israel's Security Doctrine", *RUSI International Security Review* (1999), pp. 215-224

⁸⁰³ Byman, Daniel. "The Lebanese Hizballah and Israeli Counterterrorism", *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* (34:12, 2011), p. 917

⁸⁰⁴ Pryce-Jones, David. "Israel's Vietnam?", *National Review* (52:9, May, 2000), p. 33

that its security policy successfully deterred and contained Hizballah; and lastly from the 2006 all-out war against Hizballah through today, when the organisation has become more involved in Lebanon's political system and has put less emphasis on challenging Israel.

1982-2000: ISRAEL'S (IN)SECURITY ZONE

In June 1982 Israel invaded Lebanon, an act that is still widely viewed by Israelis as a whim of its determined, yet uncontrolled, Defence Minister at that time, Ariel Sharon. According to Ze'ev Schiff and Ehud Yaari, whose book on the 1982 Lebanon War is considered as one of the most accurate and credible accounts of the events, an entire delusional nation was dragged into the "Lebanese mud".⁸⁰⁵ After an arduous and bitter military campaign that cost the lives of more than 670 servicemen over a period of 3 years, Israel could claim only limited accomplishments.

In the aftermath, Israel's belief and confidence in its army were severely undermined. For the first time the IDF was unable to use its military superiority to achieve a decisive victory on the battlefield against the terrorist organisations.⁸⁰⁶ Consequently, the government could not present to its public and the world any tangible political benefits that were gained from a costly military campaign. Even the attempt of the Likud-led government, headed by Menachem Begin, to sign a peace agreement with the Christian leadership in Lebanon ended in a humiliating debacle.⁸⁰⁷

When the war finally ended in 1985, Israel found in Hizballah a new and dangerous rival that adopted the strategy of asymmetrical warfare, which cost the lives of many Israeli citizens. From its outset, Hizballah's operations were

⁸⁰⁵ Schiff & Yaari, pp. 380-388

⁸⁰⁶ In the 1982 war Israel was successful in defeating the Syrian army by destroying its surface-to-air missiles in Lebanon, shooting down more than 100 warplanes and inflicting heavy losses to its ground forces.

⁸⁰⁷ Bashir Gemayel, the Christian-Lebanese president-elect and a long-time ally of successive Israeli governments, was assassinated by a Syrian supporter in September 1982, before he was able to sign a peace treaty with Israel.

primarily directed against the Multi-National Force in Beirut, initially sent to oversee the evacuation of PLO forces from Lebanon and later to secure peace and stability. However, when the international force withdrew from Lebanon, Hizballah shifted its focus towards direct confrontation with the IDF forces.⁸⁰⁸ Facing a mounting number of casualties and growing public unrest, the Israeli government voted for a unilateral withdrawal from most of Lebanon's territory. In doing so, Israel admitted that it could not eradicate the terror threat from Lebanon, despite its overwhelming military advantage. Therefore, it had to settle for a lesser objective – to minimise the threat and the casualties to a tolerable level.

In an attempt to prevent the continuation of cross-border incursions and rocket launching onto Israeli civilian centres, the Israeli government decided to maintain a military presence on Lebanese soil. By creating a barrier between Israel and Lebanon, the government believed that it would prevent infiltration of Hizballah (and the other Palestinian terrorist organisations operating from Lebanon) terrorists into Israel and reduce artillery fire against its population. The land strip, that became known as the "Security Zone" consisted of 45 heavily fortified outposts manned by 1,500 IDF soldiers. Initially, the "Security Zone" was a great success and 'for fifteen years, Israel's north was relatively secure, and its residents could maintain a relatively normal life style.'⁸⁰⁹ Israel also paid, trained and equipped the closely allied South Lebanese Army (SLA), which conducted military operations on behalf of Israel inside the "Security Zone" (see map 4).

⁸⁰⁸ Jackson, Brian, et.al. "Aptitude for Destruction" (Volume 1), The RAND Corporation, 2005, p. 19

⁸⁰⁹ Luft, Gal. "Israel's Security Zone in Lebanon – A Tragedy?", *Middle East Quarterly* (5:3), September 2000, p. 14



Source: [www. http://israelipalestinian.procon.org](http://israelipalestinian.procon.org)

Map 4: Israel's "security zone" in Lebanon (1985)

The establishment of the "Security Zone" represents Israel's most ambiguous policy towards Lebanon at the time. On one hand, Israel publicly recognised Lebanon's *formal* sovereignty and thus held the Lebanese government responsible for stopping Hizballah's terrorist and guerrilla operations and dismantling its weapons. However, at the same time, it was also sceptical of Lebanon's *effective* sovereignty, and therefore felt obliged to become directly and indirectly involved in internal Lebanese affairs to stem the growing power and influence of Hizballah.⁸¹⁰ General (ret.) Eitan Ben-Eliyahu, former commander of the IDF air force, attributes this inconsistency to Israel's general difficulty to define war-time military objectives, since its security doctrine is predominantly-oriented to prevent or postpone wars. Therefore, crucial issues such as the conditions and time-line for ending a war and the necessary pace and intensity for future military maneuvers were often ill-constructed. It also made the work of the politicians much harder, as they

⁸¹⁰ Barak, Oren. "Ambiguity and Conflict in Israel-Lebanon Relations", *Israel Studies* (15:3, Fall 2000), pp. 163-188

encountered problems in mobilising public and international support for the fighting.⁸¹¹

A stark example of Israel's lack of a clearly-defined strategy towards Hizballah, which would have an immense future impact on the conflict, was the targeted assassination of Secretary-General Abbas al-Musawi in February 1992. Supposedly at that time, Israel maintained fierce and unyielding security approach against Hizballah. A day before the assassination, three IDF soldiers were brutally murdered by Palestinian Islamic Jihad fighters. Israelis responded with shock and anger, and demanded a proper retaliation. Among IDF senior ranks the name of al-Musawi immediately came up as a fitting target.⁸¹²

A military action against al-Musawi was considered months before the murder of the Israeli soldiers. Initially, the plan was to kidnap al-Musawi and use him as a bargaining chip for the release of Ron Arad, an IDF pilot who was shot down over Lebanon in October 1986 and believed to be held in Hizballah's captivity.⁸¹³ Israel's intelligence community learned that al-Musawi was scheduled to visit the village of Jibshit to speak at a Hizballah annual political rally. However, the exact details of his visit were still unclear, and the commander of the Intelligence Directorate ordered a postponement of the operation for the following year. However, he instructed Apache attack helicopters to be sent to gather more intelligence on al-Musawi and study his routine while at the rally. Clearly, the understanding among senior officers was that taking offensive action against al-Musawi was not an option. Since IDF intelligence analysts and Hizballah experts were under the impression that the kidnapping was not imminent, they did not undertake any risk assessments and evaluate the implications for the "day after".

⁸¹¹ Ben-Eliyahu, Eitan. "Defining Objectives for War: A Necessary Condition", *Ma'arachot IDF Magazine* (331, August 1993), pp. 2-5 (Hebrew)

⁸¹² For a detailed account of the planning and execution of al-Musawi's assassination, read Ronen Bergman's *By Any Means Necessary: Israel's Covert War for its POWs and MIAs*, pp. 348-369

⁸¹³ Several Hizballah senior commanders were kidnapped by IDF Special Forces between 1987 and 1989, but none of them provided information regarding Ron Arad's whereabouts.

However, the killing of the soldiers changed the plans for the al-Musawi operation. On the day of the rally, the helicopters were ordered to locate al-Musawi's motorcade and to wait for further instructions. While in the air, driven by what seemed like a one-time opportunity to eliminate him, IDF commanders suggested this alternative to the Minister of Defence and asked for his confirmation. They later briefed the Prime Minister, Yitzchak Shamir, for not more than a minute, and he immediately approved the assassination of al-Musawi. The pilots received the order and seconds later al-Musawi, his family and bodyguards were killed by guided missiles. It was the first time that Israel targeted, in broad daylight, a religious figure who was also a leader of a political organisation.

The lack of in-depth planning led to strategic blindness regarding the effects and ramifications of such an operation. Additionally, no professional discussions were held about al-Musawi's potential successors. Hours after al-Musawi's death, Hassan Nasrallah was appointed as Hizballah's new Secretary-General and the representative of the Iranian Supreme Leader in Lebanon. Hizballah's response was prompt and lethal; rockets were fired onto northern Israel for the first time since 1982 and a month later a car bomb was driven into the Israeli Embassy in Buenos Aires. Israel learned the hard-way that instant decisions have deadly effects when it comes to Hizballah. Nasrallah still serves as leader of Hizballah and is widely viewed by many as 'one of the most resourceful adversaries Israel has ever faced.'⁸¹⁴

Under Nasrallah's leadership, Hizballah intensified its attacks against Israeli targets in the "Security Zone" and against the civilian population in Israel. The sequence and lethality of the attacks resulted in a week-long military incursion by the IDF, titled "Operation Accountability", in July 1993. Three years later, on April 1996, Israel launched a second operation, "Grapes of Wrath". Both operations involved aerial bombardments and artillery shelling that inflicted heavy damage to civilian infrastructure in Lebanon. Wishing to

⁸¹⁴ Shatz, *In Search of Hezbollah*

avoid both casualties and the potential political and military entanglements, the IDF refrained from significant ground maneuvers against Hizballah targets. The Shiite organisation on its part retaliated with massive rocket attacks against northern Israel.

The operations ended after American and French officials brokered oral and written agreements between Israel and Hizballah. Israel could claim only limited political gains, and was criticised for its human rights violations. One important outcome was the Israel-Lebanon Ceasefire Understanding that was signed in April 1996 by both governments, in which the parties mutually agreed not to fire at civilian targets. Also, an international monitoring group was established to supervise the implementation of the understandings.⁸¹⁵

Although Hizballah was not officially a signatory to the understandings, it was clear that the Lebanese obligation was incumbent upon it. Despite the massive damage caused by Israel's bombings, Hizballah emerged from the operations 'relatively intact and with newfound popularity in Lebanon.'⁸¹⁶ In Israel, on the other hand, the understandings were unpopular not only among the public but also among IDF senior officers. General (ret.) Moshe Tamir, a senior IDF commander at that time, wrote that the agreement that followed operation "Grapes of Wrath" was incomprehensible, as Israel gave legitimacy to Hizballah to target its soldiers, and under some circumstances, its civilians, while dismissing the Lebanese government from its responsibility to take a full control over south Lebanon and disarm Hizballah.⁸¹⁷ In fact, the ceasefire understandings granted Hizballah an unprecedented advantage – it deterred Israel. According to Prof. Yehezkel Dror, one of Israel's leading strategic thinkers, the fear of terrorist attacks against Jewish targets outside of Israel and the launching of rockets onto Israeli civilian population, undermined its

⁸¹⁵ "Israel-Lebanon Ceasefire Understanding (April 1996)"; http://www.knesset.gov.il/process/docs/grapes_eng.htm (access 15/6/2012)

⁸¹⁶ Eisenstadt, Michael. "Hezbollah operations: past patterns, future prospects", Policy Watch 197, *The Washington institute for Near East Policy*, (7 May 1996): <http://www.washingtoninstitute.org/templateC05.php?CID=1076> (accessed 15/6/2012)

⁸¹⁷ Tamir, Moshe. *Undeclared War* (Tel Aviv: Ma'arachot Publishing House, 2005), pp.137-138 (Hebrew)

capability to capitalise the military superiority as deterrence against Hizballah.⁸¹⁸

The focal point that changed the Israeli consensus towards a unilateral withdrawal from the "Security Zone" was the year 1997. Until then, majority of Israelis believed that the military presence in Lebanon was an unfortunate necessity for the protection of northern Israel. The domestic debate on the "Security Zone" was sparked in February 1997, after two Israeli transport helicopters carrying troops to the Lebanese front collided with each other in midair and 73 soldiers were killed. Five months later, 12 Israeli elite soldiers were killed in south Lebanon on their way to a Hizballah target. After these national traumas, citizen groups emerged that were publicly opposed to the continued presence in south Lebanon.⁸¹⁹ For the first time since 1985, the price for Israel's presence in Lebanon was too high to pay and the 'conventional wisdom on the "Security Zone" began to shift.'⁸²⁰

The most influential citizen pressure group was the Four Mothers movement, founded by mothers of IDF soldiers who served in Lebanon. Their narrative: 'our husbands were fighting this war when our boys were still babies. We don't want our grandsons to still be fighting it,' received extensive media and public attention.⁸²¹ Although military commanders and politicians dismissed the women as 'overly emotional and ignorant of security concerns,' they were embraced by the Israeli public for they dared to challenge the IDF ethos and demanded answers from the government.⁸²² In fact, the withdrawal

⁸¹⁸ Dror, Yechezkel. "Grand-Strategy in the era between War and Peace", *Ma'arachot IDF Magazine* (377, June 2001), p. 6 (Hebrew)

⁸¹⁹ Israeli civil movements that called for the withdrawal of the IDF from South Lebanon were established soon after the 1982 invasion. The military incidents in 1997 significantly broadened their base of popular support.

⁸²⁰ Dassa-Kay, Dalia. "The Israeli Decision to Withdraw from Southern Lebanon", *Political Science Quarterly* (17:4, 2002-03), p. 566

⁸²¹ Ben-Dor, Rachel and Lieberfeld, Daniel. "Mission Accomplished? Israel's "Four Mothers" and the Legacies of Successful Antiwar Movements", *International Journal of Peace Studies* (13:1, Spring-Summer 2008), p. 86

⁸²² Sontag, Deborah. "Israel Honors Mothers of Lebanon Withdrawal", *The New York Times* (3/6/2000); <http://www.nytimes.com/2000/06/03/world/israel-honors-mothers-of-lebanon-withdrawal.html?pagewanted=print&src=pm> (accessed 15/6/2012)

became the main issue in the 1999 national elections, and the Labour party leader, Ehud Barak, promised to 'bring the boys home from Lebanon' if elected prime minister.⁸²³ Soon after Barak won the polls, he formally announced that Israel would unilaterally withdraw its forces from Lebanon no later than July 2000.

Clearly, at the dawn of the 21st century Israel was not winning the war against Hizballah. The ability of the Shiite organisation to endure and respond to the IDF's military incursions became one of the primary catalysts for its fast-growing popularity among the residents of South Lebanon. In light of Israel's military presence in Lebanese territory, Hizballah was not required to disband or even to disarm, as it was perceived by the public as Lebanon's sole defender. Under such circumstances, abandoning violence and integrating into Lebanon's political system was entirely unnecessary since Hizballah was able to maintain, without encountering any significant pressure, its dual-strategy of armed campaign whilst participating in the state's legitimate political system.

2000-2006: THE FOLLY OF CONTAINMENT

On 24 May 2000, IDF forces hurriedly evacuated their last outposts in south Lebanon. After 18 years and more than 1,000 casualties there was no longer an Israeli presence on Lebanese soil. The unilateral withdrawal was intended to break the existing status-quo and to stabilise a new line of defence along the internationally recognised border between the two states. Israeli decision-makers hoped that by not violating Lebanon's territorial sovereignty, Hizballah would be stripped of its pretext to attack Israel. Also, if Hizballah did attack targets within Israel, a counter-offensive would be deemed legitimate and justified under international law.⁸²⁴

⁸²³ Nisan, Mordechai. "Did Israel Betray its Lebanese Allies?", *Middle East Quarterly* (7:4, December 2000), p. 32

⁸²⁴ Magen, Erez. "The Implications of the IDF Withdrawal from South Lebanon," *Ma'arachot IDF Magazine* (414, September 2007), pp. 24-27 (Hebrew)

However, Hizballah had different plans. It claimed that a small agricultural land still under Israel's control, known as the Shebba farms, was Lebanese occupied territory and therefore remained disputed. Despite a UN confirmation that Israel fulfilled its obligation in compliance with UNSCR 425, Hizballah declared that until the Shebba farms issue is resolved, the area will be a legitimate target for resistance operations.⁸²⁵ In his victory speech just days after Israel's withdrawal, Nasrallah declared that Hizballah does not 'much care about international resolutions; all we know is that there is Lebanese territory under occupation that should be returned to Lebanon.'⁸²⁶ The significance of the farms for Hizballah was explained by Timur Goksel, former spokesperson of the UN peacekeeping force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), who argued that the area provided the organisation with both the justification to continue to bear arms and the capability to attract new devoted recruits. He concluded that in order to become an influential political power in Lebanon, Hizballah required an armed militia, and that the Shebba farms was the reason to maintain it.⁸²⁷



Source: www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/map/dpko/unifil

Map 5: South Lebanon and the Shebba Farms (2000)

⁸²⁵ UN Security Council Resolution 425 (1978) was passed soon after Israel's invasion into Lebanon in March 1978. The resolution demanded an immediate cessation of military actions and Israeli withdrawal from all Lebanese territory.

⁸²⁶ Noe, p. 240

⁸²⁷ Cited in Sobelman, p. 59

Soon after Israel's unilateral withdrawal, Hizballah bombed IDF outposts adjacent to the Shebba farms. From June 2000 until July 2006, ten IDF soldiers were killed and dozens were wounded in this region.⁸²⁸ Because of the volatility of the Shebba farms, Thomas Friedman of the New York Times described in December 2000 the area as 'the most dangerous spot in the world today.'⁸²⁹ International calls to stop Hizballah's attacks on the Shebba farms were met with more fire. In April 2002 the Quartet announced in Madrid that 'attacks at any point along the Blue Line [marking the internationally-certified border], including in the Shebba farms area in the occupied Golan Heights, are violations of Security Council resolutions.'⁸³⁰ Three years later, when the attacks did not stop, the UN Security Council announced that:

The continually asserted position of the Government of Lebanon that the Blue Line is not valid in the Shebba farms area is not compatible with Security Council resolutions. The Council has recognized the Blue Line as valid for purposes of confirming Israel's withdrawal pursuant to resolution 425.⁸³¹

After the withdrawal, the IDF redeployed along the northern border and adopted a strategy of low intensity warfare aimed at minimising the friction with Hizballah and thus reducing the threat of Israeli casualties. This strategy was derived directly from the government's instruction to implement a containment policy towards Hizballah through selective and measured responses to its provocations. The primary rationale for Israel's containment strategy was to prevent local armed clashes with Hizballah from deteriorating into a full-scale war, which did not serve Israel's strategic interests in the region. Its manifestation was portrayed on one hand in Israel's attempt to deter

⁸²⁸ "Hizballah attacks along Israel's northern border May 2000 - June 2006"; <http://www.mfa.gov.il/NR/exeres/9EE216D7-82EF-4274-B80D-6BBD1803E8A7.frameless.htm?NRMODE=Published> (accessed 3/7/2012)

⁸²⁹ Friedman, Thomas. "Foreign Affairs: Clinton's Syria Memo", *The New York Times* (1/12/2000); <http://www.nytimes.com/2000/12/01/opinion/foreign-affairs-clinton-s-syria-memo.html> (accessed 19/6/2012)

⁸³⁰ Joint Statement by UN, Russian Federation, European Union and United States (10/4/2002); <http://www.un.org/News/dh/mideast/joint-statement.htm> (accessed 3/7/2012)

⁸³¹ Security Council Condemns Violence Along Blue Line Between Israel And Lebanon, Press Release SC8299 (28/1/2005); <http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs/2005/sc8299.doc.htm> (accessed 3/7/2012)

Hizballah, while on the other the IDF was ordered to act and responded to provocations in a manner that would not escalate the ongoing conflict.⁸³²

One of the main reasons for choosing such a strategy was Israel's desire to refrain, at all costs, from a "second military front" while the IDF was fighting the Palestinian terrorist organisations in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The escalating struggle with Palestinian terrorism overstretched the IDF forces and wore out the Israeli public, thus the government sought to avoid any forceful retaliation to Hizballah's aggravations.⁸³³ Another important reason for containment was the prosperous economy (mostly from tourism) and the significant improvement in the sense of security among the citizens living in northern Israel. Defence commentators criticised the government basing its security policy on 'a strategy of bed-and-breakfasts and skiing, according to which it is best not to really respond to harm, kidnappings and provocations lest it endanger the tourism.'⁸³⁴

The containment strategy characterised by the slogan "let Hizballah's rockets rust on their own", was meticulously implemented across the Israel-Lebanon border from May 2000 until the outbreak of the Second Lebanon War in July 2006.⁸³⁵ Although a reasonable strategy in the existing geopolitical environment, the costs would prove to be detrimental for Israel's deterrence image and military reputation in the region. Clearly, the tactical consequences for the IDF were severe: the military presence in the Northern border was sparse, operational activity was reduced to a minimum, and intelligence gathering was neglected. Overall the Israeli army refrained from initiating contact with Hizballah fighters and did not actively seek to destroy its armed capabilities. At the same time, Hizballah underwent a massive build-up of its

⁸³² "Winograd Commission of Inquiry for events in the Second Lebanon War", Interim Report, 30.4.07 (Hebrew), pp. 44-48

⁸³³ Brom, Shlomo. "The Withdrawal from Southern Lebanon: One Year Later", *Strategic Assessment* (4:2, August 2001); <http://www.inss.org.il/publications.php?cat=21&incat=&read=705>

⁸³⁴ Schiff, Ze'ev. "Who will deter whom?" *Haaretz* (3/32006); <http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/opinion/who-will-deter-whom-1.181749> (accessed 17/6/2012)

⁸³⁵ Ben-Israel, Itzhak. "The First Missile War", *Policy Paper of the Security Studies Programme*, Tel Aviv University (2007), p. 12 (Hebrew)

armed capabilities, with help and funds from Syria and Iran which provided long-range rockets, advanced anti-tank missiles and unmanned aerial vehicles. It also fortified its bunkers, dug underground launch pads and improved its command and control as well as intelligence gathering capabilities along the Israel-Lebanon border.⁸³⁶

The first test of the containment strategy occurred five months after the withdrawal. In a well-planned and coordinated attack, that is often regarded as the most complex and sophisticated attack carried out by the organisation until then, Hizballah guerillas infiltrated Israel and kidnapped three IDF soldiers who were on patrol (on the same day, Hizballah also abducted an Israeli citizen abroad).⁸³⁷ Instead of "going up in flames", as Prime Minister Barak threatened if Hizballah would attack Israel after the withdrawal, the response was reserved and symbolic, and it did not deter the organisation from kidnapping Israelis again.⁸³⁸ Evidently, Israel's warning that any violation of its sovereignty would be met with an immediate and fierce response and that the governments of Lebanon and Syria be held accountable for Hizballah's actions, proved an empty one.

Israel's self-restraint and minimal responses to Hizballah's armed attacks continued even after six Israelis were killed in a kibbutz near the northern border in 2002, a 16-year old boy was killed by a rocket in 2003 and another attempt to kidnap soldiers was foiled in 2005. All together, since the unilateral withdrawal until July 2006, twenty Israelis were killed by Hizballah, without any significant Israeli retaliation. It seemed that the politicians were focusing on the benefits of the containment strategy, while the costs were mostly overlooked. The Winograd Commission of Inquiry concluded in 2007, that it did not find any evidence that the government held discussions on the

⁸³⁶ Lambeth, Benjamin. "Air Operations in Israel's War against Hezbollah", RAND Corporation (2011)

⁸³⁷ For a detailed account of the kidnapping of the soldiers, see Ronen Bergman's *By Any Means Necessary: Israel's Covert War for its POWs and MIAs*, pp. 440-474

⁸³⁸ Quote by Lt. General (ret.) Dan Halutz, who served as the IDF Chief of the General Staff during the Second Lebanon War, at a conference titled "Three Years Since the Second Lebanon War", held by the Institute for National Security Studies on July 2009 (Hebrew)

long-term effects of the containment, and the lack of it reflected a failure in the strategic, political and security decision-making process of successive Israeli governments.⁸³⁹

Interestingly, among the IDF High Command there were generals who disapproved of the containment strategy, but considered it a political directive and did not attempt to challenge it. However, they also did not order a comprehensive study that systematically analysed the long-term advantages and disadvantages of this strategy and offered the decision-makers alternative options.⁸⁴⁰ General Tamir wrote in his memoirs that 'Israel cannot disregard the numerous tactical failures, and most certainly not the systemic catastrophe, that stemmed from the IDF's unilateral withdrawal without any security or political agreement with Lebanon.'⁸⁴¹ The most profound criticism of the containment strategy came from the IDF commander of the northern front during the Second Lebanon War, who argued that the actual meaning of this strategy is 'renouncing Israel's sovereignty and giving Hizballah a permission to act freely along the northern border.'⁸⁴² A declassified parliamentary report of the second Lebanon War concluded that apart from damaging the IDF's readiness and activity in the northern front, the containment strategy did not provide appropriate operational and intelligence responses to the level and variety of threats posed by Hizballah.⁸⁴³ Lastly, the Winograd Commission determined that the containment policy allowed Hizballah to choose the time and place for its attacks, which gave it a significant strategic and tactical advantage on Israel. Hizballah's weapons build-up was unhindered by Israel, as were the relations between the organisations and its patrons in Syria and Iran.

⁸³⁹ "The Winograd Commission of Inquiry", Interim Report, p. 46

⁸⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 46

⁸⁴¹ Tamir, p. 272

⁸⁴² "The Winograd Commission of Inquiry", Interim Report, p. 47

⁸⁴³ Knesset's Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee report on the Second Lebanon War, December 2007, p. 67 (Hebrew)

This created a balance-of-power that for the first time in its history was not in favour of Israel.⁸⁴⁴

Clearly, Israel's containment doctrine, which was promoted by the highest military and political echelons, failed to deter Hizballah or prevent the shipments of advanced weapons systems from Iran and Syria from reaching their destination in Lebanon. In fact, the containment strategy did not pose any threat to Hizballah's existence, and it allowed it to concentrate its efforts on expanding its power to control the Lebanese political system. At times when containment was dominating Israel's strategic thinking, Hizballah's electoral popularity significantly increased and its 'status became more legitimate despite its continued control of an armed militia.'⁸⁴⁵

2006-PRESENT: "ISRAEL HAS GONE CRAZY"

One of Hizballah's justifications to maintain its armed capabilities, after Israel's unilateral withdrawal, was its self-proclaimed responsibility for releasing Lebanese nationals who were imprisoned in Israel. On behalf of these "bleeding wounds", Nasrallah openly declared that liberation of Lebanon could not be complete until the last remaining Lebanese prisoner was released. In January 2004 he stated that Hizballah's armed campaign against Israel 'was simply a legitimate reaction, and we [Hizballah] shall continue to act in this way as long as the enemy continues to commit acts of aggression and kidnap our people.'⁸⁴⁶

True to its words, Hizballah did not give up its attempts to abduct IDF soldiers from Israel's territory to be used as negotiating cards in future prisoner exchanges.⁸⁴⁷ In April 2006, Nasrallah provided a preview of

⁸⁴⁴ "The Winograd Commission of Inquiry", Interim Report, pp. 62-63

⁸⁴⁵ Wiegand, Krista. "Reformation of a Terrorist Group: Hezbollah as a Lebanese Political Party", *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* (32: 8, 2009), p. 676

⁸⁴⁶ Noe, p. 304

⁸⁴⁷ After Hizballah's successful attempt to kidnap four Israelis in 2000, more than five other attempts followed but were foiled by the IDF.

Hizballah's future plan when assured the Lebanese prisoners in Israel that 'the coming days and the spilled blood will prove me right'.⁸⁴⁸ On a clear morning in July 2006, a Hizballah elite unit infiltrated Israel and kidnapped two IDF soldiers who were on patrol and killed eight others.⁸⁴⁹ The combination of dreary atmosphere among Israelis and the desire of politicians and army commanders alike to revenge the death and humiliation, led the government to issue belligerent declarations and make hasty decisions that ultimately led to the Second Lebanon War.⁸⁵⁰

Contrary to the hesitancy and restraint towards Hizballah provocations in accordance with the containment strategy, Israel decided to react differently and far more aggressively to the ensuing hostage situation in the summer of 2006. The IDF Chief of Staff during the war, General (ret.) Dan Haloutz, was quoted saying that in retaliation 'Israel will put Lebanon back 20 years.'⁸⁵¹ In his memoirs, General Haloutz explains that the response was intended to change the status-quo by acting beyond Hizballah's expectations. The rationale of the Israel-has-gone-crazy strategy was to enhance its regional deterrent image.⁸⁵²

The powerful response eventually led to a full-scale war. However, at that point, no one in the Israeli government or the IDF High Command realised that this would be the outcome. After the war, government ministers admitted that a resolution on a war was neither presented nor authorised, and that they were asked to approve a number of limited operations. Strikingly, one senior politician claimed that the government never had a full understanding of the events. When confronted with such allegation, General Haloutz replied that the

⁸⁴⁸ Noe, p. 371

⁸⁴⁹ Another IDF soldier, Corporal Gilad Shalit, was kidnapped by the Palestinian terrorist organisation Hamas, two weeks earlier near the Gaza Strip. For a detailed account of the kidnap operations read Ronen Bergman's *By Any Means Necessary: Israel's Covert War for its POWs and MIAs*, pp. 510-586

⁸⁵⁰ Harel, Amos & Issacharoff, Avi. *34 Days: Israel, Hezbollah and the War in Lebanon* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. 15

⁸⁵¹ Shelah & Limor, Shelah, Ofer & Limor, Yoav. *Captives of Lebanon* (Tel Aviv: Yedioth Ahronot Books, 2007), p. 54

⁸⁵² Haloutz, Dani. *Straightforward* (Tel Aviv: Yedioth Ahronot Books, 2010), p. 360-363 (Hebrew)

responsibility of the political echelon was not to know the details but to ask the right questions.⁸⁵³

Consequently, the IDF attacked numerous Hizballah targets in south Lebanon and Beirut using standoff high-precision ammunition from air, land and sea. Yet, the IDF still refrained from ground maneuvers fearing heavy losses in close-encounter battles with Hizballah guerillas. Although most of Hizballah's long-range missiles were destroyed in an Israeli preemptive strike, thousands of medium and short-range rockets remained intact. Hizballah reacted with heavy rocket barrages that landed farther south than Israel expected. Almost one million Israeli citizens were in range of the rockets, and the shelling continued until the last day of the war, with Israel proving incapable of preventing it.

Hizballah had other important victories during the war; for the first time it hit an Israeli warship with an Iranian version of land-to-sea missile and a heavy transport helicopter using an anti-aircraft shoulder missile, killing a total of nine soldiers. Despite the astonishing achievements of Hizballah, the Israeli government did not reassess the military and political situation according to the developments in the battlefield and the international front. Angered and frustrated by the lethality of Hizballah's attacks, the government ordered to intensify the aerial attacks. By the end of the first week of fighting, the IDF had run out of targets and for the next two weeks the attacks continued without significant objectives and brought neither results nor change.⁸⁵⁴

By the end of July 2006, when the war continued without any apparent achievement, the government faced a dilemma – to begin a major ground offensive and risk heavy losses, or to push for a ceasefire without resolving the rocket threat while knowing its devastating effect on Israel's deterrence capability.⁸⁵⁵ Ultimately the government decided to deploy more than 60,000

⁸⁵³ Shelah & Limor, p. 54-55

⁸⁵⁴ For a detailed account of the 34 days of war read Shelah & Limor *Captives of Lebanon*.

⁸⁵⁵ Harel & Issacharoff, p. 152-153

reservists. General Haloutz candidly admitted in his biography that he made a critical mistake by not recruiting the reservists necessary for a ground maneuver at an earlier stage.⁸⁵⁶ The reservists that arrived to the Israel-Lebanon border were highly motivated, yet their late arrival meant that they were untrained and ill-equipped.

Three days before the end of the war, when a UN-brokered ceasefire was imminent, the government finally decided to send ground forces into the battlefield. Officially, the reason was to pressure the international community to reach a more favorable agreement to Israel, and in case the negotiations fail the IDF will be in a better tactical position to act.⁸⁵⁷ The much-anticipated ground maneuver had devastating results for the IDF. In the fierce fighting with Hizballah guerillas, 33 soldiers were killed and dozens were injured. On the morning of 14 August 2006, a ceasefire took effect after 34 days of war. A total of 169 Israelis and 1,100 Lebanese were killed. Several IDF senior commanders, including General Haloutz, took personal responsibility for mismanaging the war and resigned from service, yet none of them admitted personal wrongdoing or collective failure.

Essentially, the Second Lebanon War was the epitome of Israel's unsuccessful decision-making process and strategy towards Hizballah since 1982. Despite Israel's apparent strategic advantages, mainly its military superiority, international support and strong public consensus, the majority of its decisions were not a result of a systematic, well-researched and comprehensive analysis. The strategic and tactical implications of Israel's actions were often overlooked if not completely ignored. This weakness was thoroughly discussed by General (ret.) Giora Eiland, former head of Israel's National Security Council, who attributed the flawed decision-making process to the unstable environment that stemmed from Israel's political structure, and the lack of a professional and authoritative advisory body responsible for conducting a methodical evaluation of Israel's strategic position on all fronts.

⁸⁵⁶ Haloutz, p. 390

⁸⁵⁷ Harel & Issacharoff, p. 214

Consequently, during the Second Lebanon War, the government was not presented with additional alternatives (besides the ones suggested by the military), the politicians were unaware of the events that happened in the battlefield and the international arena in real-time, the military was disconnected from the government's decisions, and finally there was no strategic initiative regarding ways to resolve the conflict, but rather intuitive conflict-management decisions.⁸⁵⁸

A stark example of the severe disconnect between the government and the IDF was projected in Israeli Prime Minister, Ehud Olmert, speech a few days after the war began. In the speech, later described as "Churchillian", he outlined the reasons why Israel went to war and set the objectives for ending it: return of the abducted soldiers, unconditional ceasefire, deployment of Lebanon's army along the Israeli border and the removal of Hizballah's presence from south Lebanon and its disarmament.⁸⁵⁹ Although Olmert's approval ratings peaked, the IDF understood immediately that the prime minister stipulated goals unattainable by military means only.⁸⁶⁰ When asked by the Winograd Commission why he presented the return of the soldiers as a condition for ending the war, Olmert replied: 'some things are said because they have to be said...it is a moral issue...and I need to instill hope in the public.'⁸⁶¹ Due to the unrealistic objectives to end the fighting and its misconduct of the war, the commission concluded that Prime Minister Olmert was personally responsible for the flawed decisions and decision-making process leading up to and during the war. He was also accused of taking a stand without demanding a detailed plan to be presented by the IDF and failing to discuss other non-military

⁸⁵⁸ Eiland, Giora. "The Decision-Making Process in Israel", in Elran, Meir & Brom, Shlomo. *The Second Lebanon War: Strategic Dimensions* (Tel Aviv: Yedioth Ahronot Books, 2007), pp. 25-33 (Hebrew)

⁸⁵⁹ Harel & Issacharoff, p. 107-108

⁸⁶⁰ Shelah & Limor, p. 122-123

⁸⁶¹ "The Winograd Commission of Inquiry", Interim Report, p. 101

alternatives. In this respect, the prime minister did not act in the necessary manners that are critical for initiating and managing a war.⁸⁶²

The fact that Israel did not win the war is evident from its results: the soldiers were not released, Hizballah remained heavily armed and its political power and influence in Lebanon increased dramatically. Nonetheless, it is also not clear that Hizballah came out of the war victorious. Indeed, internal criticism was pointed against Hizballah blaming it for dragging Lebanon into a second war with Israel that resulted in an overwhelming destruction to civilian infrastructure. Nasrallah himself, who was often perceived as one of the shrewdest leaders in the region, was being treated as a gambler who lost after a long winning streak. Eyal Zisser, a renowned Hizballah expert, argues that after the war:

Lebanon is a divided country teetering on the verge of a civil war that is largely a result of Hezbollah's bellicosity toward Israel and its refusal to submit itself to the domain of politics with the rest of Lebanon. Hezbollah itself is a battered and bruised organisation struggling to regain its standing inside Lebanon.⁸⁶³

Ali al-Amin, a prominent Shiite scholar, warned in October 2012, that Hizballah's military moves might drag Lebanon again into a 'needless war which Lebanon cannot afford.' He stressed that the organisation's entire weapons arsenal must 'be put under the Lebanese state authority to be part of Lebanon's defence network.'⁸⁶⁴ A western diplomat stationed in Beirut argues that Nasrallah did not foresee the war 'not even in his worst nightmare.'⁸⁶⁵ Clearly, Hizballah was surprised by Israel's game-changing retaliation and expected another short and limited confrontation that would lift its prestige and remove the discourse in Lebanon about disarming the organisation.

⁸⁶² Ibid, p. 115

⁸⁶³ Zisser, Eyal. "Nasrallah's Defeat in the 2006 War", *Middle East Quarterly* (16:1, Winter 2009), p. 28

⁸⁶⁴ "Hezbollah drones may drag Lebanon into needless war", *Arabs Today* (17/10/2012); <http://en.arabstoday.net/20121017207620/hezbollah-drones-may-drag-lebanon-into-needless-war.html> (accessed 16/11/2012)

⁸⁶⁵ Cited in Harel & Issacharoff, p. 84

The aftermath of the war found Hizballah beaten but not defeated. The losses suffered forced the organisation to invest its resources and energy in rebuilding its military, social and political infrastructures. To achieve this, Hizballah had to keep the Israel-Lebanon border more peaceful than ever before. Fearing that the organisation and Lebanon would not be able to withstand another war with Israel, Nasrallah promised that there will not be another round of armed confrontation.⁸⁶⁶

Evidently, Israel's desire to demonstrate that it "has gone crazy" proved itself, as Nasrallah disappeared from the public eye and is believed to stay in an underground bunker, re-surfacing only on special and heavily guarded occasions. His need to remain hidden most of the year is not only a personal blow to Nasrallah's prestige and image, but it also 'reinforces the perception of Hizballah's vulnerability to assassination and sabotage.'⁸⁶⁷ Facing a new balance-of-power with Israel, Hizballah chose a political struggle for its next battle, aiming at bringing the Shiite community to the helms of the Lebanese state. Additionally, it invested tremendous resources to rebuff the calls for Hizballah's disarmament by gaining veto power in the Lebanese cabinet. Ultimately, the new status-quo with Israel enabled Hizballah to become more embedded in Lebanon's political system while maintaining its armed capabilities.

HIZBALLAH: THE UNWELCOMED POLITICAL PARTNER

Ever since Hizballah first showed its interest in a deeper political engagement in the early 1990s, it was clear to Israel as well as to the Lebanese government that due to its domestic popularity and prowess on the battlefield it could not be ignored. However, at that time, Israel perceived Hizballah as a terrorist and a guerilla organisation and therefore was bent on destroying it using exclusively military means. The Lebanese government, for its part, saw in

⁸⁶⁶ Zisser, *Lebanon Blood in the Cedar's*, pp. 335-337

⁸⁶⁷ Zisser, "Nasrallah's Defeat in the 2006 War", p. 29

Hizballah a threat to the secular republic and was looking for ways to minimise its political influence. The rival Israeli and Lebanese governments commonly saw in Hizballah an unwelcomed political partner, and went to great lengths to undermine it.

The appointment of Nasrallah as Secretary-General in 1992 represented a shift in Hizballah's Islamist vision towards a more moderate and conventional national agenda that included opening up Lebanese society and politics to a more tolerant approach. After receiving the approval of Ali Khamenei (Khomeini's successor as Iran's Supreme Leader) to participate in the elections, which would enable Hizballah to promote further its ideological agenda and resistance operations, the organisation's political party fared well, winning eight seats in the parliament. An additional four seats were won by Hizballah's independent sympathizers. Indeed, the threat of being excluded from the circles of power in Lebanon and the changing domestic and regional circumstances, led to a careful analysis that proved successful. Becoming a legitimate political actor contributed to Hizballah's reputation as the representative of the marginalised Shiite community, but also placed the organisation in a complex position as its armed operations could drag Lebanon into an unwanted military conflict with Israel.⁸⁶⁸

Hizballah's electoral successes in 1992 and again in 1996 confirmed Israel's fears that the Shiite organisation "is here to stay". Consequently, Israel formulated a political strategy that would hold the Lebanese government responsible for Hizballah's armed provocations. The practical import of this strategy was to view any attack by Hizballah as an act of war by the state of Lebanon, as the organisation was a legitimate member in the Lebanese parliament and from 2005 also part of the government.⁸⁶⁹ Accordingly, Israel would retaliate with heavy attacks on Lebanese civilian infrastructure aimed at punishing the Lebanese state and people. In doing so, Israel hoped to urge the

⁸⁶⁸ Azani, pp. 94-103

⁸⁶⁹ Hirst, p. 333-334

Lebanese government to disarm Hizballah in compliance with several UN resolutions.

Since Israel officially refuses to negotiate with Hizballah directly, in its eyes the resolution for the "Hizballah problem" lies in a separate peace agreement with Lebanon, or as a part of a comprehensive agreement with Syria. In 1996 an opportunity emerged for Israel to sign a peace treaty with Syria and Lebanon. The importance of this is often overlooked. In the aftermath of Israel's military operation "Grapes of Wrath", Israeli, Syrian and Lebanese delegates had a chance to meet in person through the monitoring group that was established to supervise any breaches of the written understandings. General Tamir, who was the Israeli delegate to the meetings recalls that despite the hostility, a constructive dialogue was established between the rival parties, practical discussions were held and understandings were reached.⁸⁷⁰

Building on the relative success of the mutual understandings, together with Israel's desire to further promote the peace process (following the Oslo Accords that were signed with the Palestinians in 1993), Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu launched in July 1996 his "Lebanon-First" initiative. Israel proposed to withdraw its forces from Lebanon in return for Lebanese and Syrian guarantees that they would disarm Hizballah. This far-reaching offer was rejected by Syrian President Hafez al-Assad, since it did not include a similar Israeli commitment to withdraw from the Golan Heights (occupied from Syria in the 1967 Six-Day War). The Lebanese Prime Minister, Rafik Al-Hariri, also turned down the offer because he did not want to defy al-Assad or to confront Hizballah without Syrian backing.⁸⁷¹ Facing both Syrian and Lebanese refusals, Netanyahu wondered at the irony that an Israeli prime minister 'announces he wants to get out of the territory of an Arab state – Lebanon. And the Syrian government, together with the Lebanese, are opposing this

⁸⁷⁰ Tamir, p. 138-139

⁸⁷¹ "Lebanon-First", Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs (19/7/1996); <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Archive/Articles/1996/LEBANON%20FIRST%20-%2019-Jul-96> (accessed 2/7/2012)

withdrawal.⁸⁷² The political stalemate soon led to the collapse of the fragile "Grapes of Wrath" understandings, and Israel and Hizballah returned to a low-intensity warfare that lasted until July 2006, and no direct negotiations were held between Israeli and Lebanese governments since.

However, a dialogue between Israel and Syria did take place and despite the relative optimism for a successful conclusion, it also proved futile in 2000. In an attempt to emphasise the consequence of the failure of the Israel-Syria track, Blanford describes what could have happened if the talks had concluded in a peace treaty:

Lebanon would have followed Syria's lead and signed a deal with Israel, Hizballah would have been disarmed under Syrian fiat, and quiet would have prevailed along Israel's northern border. There would have been no Shebba farms campaign, no military buildup by Hizballah in south Lebanon from 2000 on, and no war in 2006, nor would the Lebanese and Israelis continue to be living under the unrelenting threat of a fresh conflict that promises to be even more destructive than the last.⁸⁷³

Without a peace agreement with Lebanon, Israel was left with indirect negotiations with Hizballah through German mediators, which were limited only to a tactical dialogue aimed at promoting several prisoner exchanges (in 1998, 2004 and 2008). Blinded by its wounded pride and inability to defeat Hizballah on the battlefield, Israel refused to recognise Hizballah as a potential political partner, although it is clear to IDF commanders as well as decision-makers that the "Hizballah problem" cannot be resolved through exclusively military means. The Winograd Commission criticised, once again, Israeli governments who sought a solution to the conflict with Hizballah, yet failed to understand its position within the internal Lebanese balance-of-power. Furthermore, Israel did not consider the impact of military operations against Lebanon on Hizballah's standing and the interests of international actors in

⁸⁷² Cited in Eisenberg, Laura. "Israel's South Lebanon Imbroglio", *Middle East Quarterly* (4:2, June 1997), p. 64

⁸⁷³ Blanford, p. 252

Lebanon, as the primary factors that can encourage or hinder a peaceful resolution.⁸⁷⁴

Even more complex than Israel's political approach to Hizballah, was the dilemma that Lebanese governments were faced with when dealing with the organisation as a legitimate member of the state's political system. Hizballah's far-reaching social and welfare activities, serving both Shiites and non-Shiites, bolstered its public support and at the same time undermined the authority of the Lebanese government, which failed to provide similar services for its people. Consequently, Hizballah's attempts to capitalise on its popularity to win key political positions and to continue promoting its Islamist agenda, in which social predominance would shift towards the Shiite community, were long perceived by Lebanese decision-makers and public opinion leaders as a threat to the state.⁸⁷⁵ Yet, because of its status among Lebanese, Hizballah could not be ignored and successive governments formed a political dialogue with the organisation hoping that it will moderate its views and objectives.

Being an integral part of Lebanon's parliament, although taking an opposition role at first, led many to believe that Hizballah was undergoing a "Lebanonisation" process that would eventually transform the organisation into a full-fledged conventional political movement renouncing its long-term objectives to establish an Islamist regime in Lebanon.⁸⁷⁶ Surprisingly, Hizballah leaders insinuated before the 1992 elections that the organisation would consider supporting an Israel-Lebanon peace agreement, halt its armed resistance against Israel and focus on objecting to normalization with Israel.⁸⁷⁷ But Nasrallah was quick to dismiss the hopes of Hizballah shedding its *Jihadist* agenda when he said after the 1992 elections that:

In reality, we were, and will always be, the party of resistance that operates from Lebanon in reaction to [Israeli] occupation

⁸⁷⁴ "The Winograd Commission of Inquiry", Final Report (January 2008), p. 558

⁸⁷⁵ Blanford, pp. 100-102

⁸⁷⁶ Rabil, Robert. "Hezbollah, the Islamic Association and Lebanon's Confessional System", *The Levantine Review* (1:1, Spring 2012), pp. 56-56

⁸⁷⁷ Zisser, *Lebanon Blood in the Cedar's*, pp. 213-214

and daily aggression...our participation in the elections and entry into the National Assembly do not alter the fact that we are a resistance party; we shall, in fact, work to turn the whole of Lebanon into a country of resistance.⁸⁷⁸

Indeed, Hizballah was successful in integrating itself into the Lebanese political system, and at the same time maintaining its status as an armed resistance organisation. Hizballah's popularity grew stronger as a result of its political, social and welfare activities, but its prestige, glory and uniqueness came from its struggle against Israel. Nonetheless, after Israel's unilateral withdrawal in May 2000, which stripped Hizballah of its legitimacy to attack Israel, Lebanese politicians called to disarm the organisation and hand its weapons over to the state's army. Facing such vocal criticism, Blanford explains that Hizballah came up with a new reasoning for its need to keep the weapons; it now had to ensure that Israel *would not come back* to Lebanon. In his conversation with Nasrallah in 2003, Hizballah's leader argued that a popular resistance in south Lebanon, and not Lebanon's regular army, was necessary for Lebanon's national defence, and therefore 'any disarming of Hizballah or removing it from the south will mean that the Lebanese arena will be left open for the Israelis to do whatever they want.'⁸⁷⁹

Hizballah encountered an even greater challenge to its status as an armed militia after Prime Minister Hariri's assassination by pro-Syrian elements in February 2005. The murder was the result of a crisis in the Lebanon-Syria relations that stemmed from Syria's meddling in Lebanese internal affairs. Apparently, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad pressured Lebanon to change its constitution to allow a three-year extension of the pro-Syrian Lebanese President Emile Lahoud. Prime Minister Hariri objected to such an amendment and was reportedly threatened by the Syrian President in a meeting that took place in August 2004: 'President Lahoud is me. Whatever I tell him, he follows suit. This extension is to happen or else I will break Lebanon

⁸⁷⁸ Noe, p. 88

⁸⁷⁹ Blanford, p. 306

over your head...so you either do as you are told or we will get you and your family wherever you are.'⁸⁸⁰

A UN Security Council Resolution 1559 (2004), which called for free and fair presidential election in Lebanon, for all remaining foreign forces to withdraw from Lebanon and for the disbanding and disarmament of all Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias, further escalated the already volatile atmosphere in Lebanon.⁸⁸¹ Hariri's determination to stand against Syria's interventions in Lebanon as well as his support in UNSCR 1559 was the primary reason for his killing. The assassination generated domestic and international pressure on Syria to withdraw its forces from Lebanon, and subsequently president al-Assad announced in early March 2005 Syria's disengagement from Lebanon.⁸⁸²

With the Syrian's evacuation from Lebanon, Hizballah lost its political tutelage and questions were raised over its insistence on keeping its weapons. Lebanese prominent Druze leader, Walid Jumblatt, became a fierce opponent of Hizballah's armed militia and a vocal representative of those who argued for its disarmament. In a call to Nasrallah in April 2005 he said that the 'war of liberation is over,' and therefore Hizballah 'should turn in [its] weapons and dismantle [its] "state-within-a-state", for no country in the world allows an irregular militia to take law and order duties along with its regular forces.'⁸⁸³ Hizballah's reply was swift and clear. In a speech in May 2005, Nasrallah admitted that the organisation is 'eager to have peace, stability and national unity in Lebanon; we do not wish to attack anyone, and never have, and will also not allow anyone else to attack Lebanon.' However, he warned that if

⁸⁸⁰ Quoted in the Report of the International Independent Investigation Commission established pursuant to the Security Council Resolution 1595 (2005), pp. 17-18; <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N05/563/67/PDF/N0556367.pdf?OpenElement> (accessed 12/8/2012)

⁸⁸¹ For the full text of UNSCR 1559 visit: http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1559%282004%29 (accessed 3/8/2012)

⁸⁸² Bosco, Robert. "The Assassination of Rafik Hariri: Foreign Policy Perspectives", *International Political Science Review* (30:4, 2009), pp. 349-361

⁸⁸³ Hirst, p. 314

anyone 'tries to disarm the resistance, we will fight him...[and] we will consider any hand that tries to seize our weapons as an Israeli hand and will cut it off.'⁸⁸⁴

Despite Nasrallah's threats, without Syrian support to prevent Lebanese political parties to make decisions that could negatively affect Hizballah, the organisation was 'forced to move one step closer toward becoming an ordinary political party, by joining the executive cabinet.'⁸⁸⁵ In the 2005 parliamentary elections, Hizballah consolidated a partnership with its political rival Amal, known as the "March 8 Alliance", and together they won 35 seats in the National Assembly. The new Prime Minister, Fuad Siniora, who was leading the anti-Syrian "March 14 Alliance", appointed five ministers who owed their allegiance to Hizballah and Amal. Joining the government was seen as the final stage in the process of moderation. However, Sheikh Qassem explains that after the Syrian withdrawal Hizballah was 'directly responsible for providing the domestic protection in a better way than before,' and therefore could rely only itself now.⁸⁸⁶

Clearly, Hizballah's increased involvement in the political system did not put an end to its armed conflict with Israel, as the outbreak of the Second Lebanon War in 2006 proves. Lebanese public opinion was outraged and blamed Hizballah for making a war and peace decision, traditionally the most fundamental right of a sovereign state, without consulting the government of which it was formally a part. Jumblat famously wrote that "Lebanon has been taken hostage by Hizballah", and that the organisation's unilateral decision to declare war with Israel 'put the Lebanese state, the only Arab democracy in the region, at risk.' He further noted that after the war there is an opportunity to dismantle Hizballah and 'to enhance Lebanese authority in the south, then all

⁸⁸⁴ Noe, p. 349

⁸⁸⁵ Berti, Benedetta. "Armed Groups as Political Parties and Their Role in Electoral Politics", p. 955

⁸⁸⁶ Hirst, p. 313

over the country. This will deprive the Israelis of any pretext to attack us because of Hizballah.'⁸⁸⁷

The calls against Hizballah's claim to hold weapons independently further invigorated the organisation to restore the pre-Hariri assassination consensus regarding its military apparatus. Consequently, Hizballah stepped up its political activism to force the elected government to resign. Berti asserts that in doing so, Hizballah's real objective was revealed: 'to obtain veto power in the cabinet so that it might block any decision that would compromise its military interests.'⁸⁸⁸ Recognising that its base of support comes from the streets, Nasrallah called on the masses to attend demonstrations in favour of a national unity government. At the same time, he toned down charges that Hizballah's weapons would be directed against the Lebanese people. In an interview held in August 2006, he said:

Have we ever threatened the Lebanese? Have we ever used these weapons to wage a battle inside Lebanon? Have we ever used our weapons as a source of strength in municipal or parliamentary elections, or to impose certain shares or conditions? Never!⁸⁸⁹

Soon after his calming words, Nasrallah acted differently when he initiated a political crisis in November 2006, after the government decided to call for an international tribunal for the investigation of Hariri's assassination. This was the first step in a political campaign to delegitimise the Lebanese government. As a result, Lebanon deteriorated into a crisis, during which the government was paralysed and could barely manage the state's affairs. Simultaneously, an inter-ethnic cycle of violence began with the assassinations of individuals from both camps.⁸⁹⁰ After months of failed attempts to elect a new president, the state drifted into a political deadlock. The tension and hostility climaxed in May 2008, after the government decided to shut down

⁸⁸⁷ Jumblat, Walid. "Hezbollah took Lebanon hostage", *New Perspectives Quarterly* (23:4, Fall 2006), p. 29

⁸⁸⁸ Berti, "Armed Groups as Political Parties and Their Role in Electoral Politics", p. 955

⁸⁸⁹ Noe, p. 403

⁸⁹⁰ Azani, "Hezbollah's Strategy of "Walking on the Edge", p. 748-749

Hizballah's independent telecommunication networks and dismiss Beirut's airport security chief, who was affiliated with Hizballah. Nasrallah responded that this step was equal to a declaration of war, and warned that 'we have a right to defend our existence from whoever declares and begins war with us, even if they are our brothers.'⁸⁹¹

A military confrontation was inevitable. On 8 May 2008, Hizballah fighters took arms and conquered the Sunni western parts of Beirut, while the Lebanese army stood aside unable to challenge Hizballah on the streets. Berti describes the the bloody clashes and scores of dead as 'the worst episode of violence since the civil war.'⁸⁹² After a few days of armed engagement between the different sectarian groups, Hizballah gunmen were ordered to stand down and the army took control over the streets. Zisser concludes that Hizballah's move was calculated and proportionate, but the message was clear – Hizballah was able to crush the Lebanese system including taking over Beirut, but willingly refrained from doing so.⁸⁹³ Rival Lebanese leaders reached a reconciliation agreement, known as the "Doha Accord", which led to the election of Michel Suleiman as president and the creation of relative political stability.

Although the deployment of its gunmen against the Sunni and Druze rival communities broke the taboo of not using its weapons against fellow Lebanese, Hizballah became the dominant political force in Lebanon. In the next parliamentary elections in November 2009, the "March 8 Alliance", headed by Hizballah, won 57 seats and although the rival alliance formed a government headed by Sa'ad Hariri (Rafik Hariri's son), the opposition received 15 ministerial posts that gave Hizballah a de-facto veto. Azani argues that even though Hizballah-led opposition did not win a majority of votes, it 'had

⁸⁹¹ Cited in Blanford, p. 448

⁸⁹² Berti, "Armed Groups as Political Parties and Their Role in Electoral Politics", p. 956

⁸⁹³ Zisser, *Lebanon Blood in the Cedar's*, pp. 346-347 (Hebrew)

succeeded in consolidating its power base within the Lebanese political system and had moved one step closer to its goal of taking control of Lebanon.⁸⁹⁴

In 2011 Hizballah ultimately succeeded in its mission, when Prime Minister Hariri's government was toppled after opposition ministers resigned over the intention of the international tribunal to name Hizballah members who were involved in his father's assassination. The shift in the political balance-of-power within the Lebanese parliament, gave the Hizballah-led alliance, for the first time, a majority of seats (68 out of a total of 128), which resulted in the appointment of Najib Mikati as the new prime minister. Mikati, a pro-Syrian Sunni businessman and former politician, was in effect Hizballah's candidate. In his first cabinet statement, held in July 2011, Mikati announced that his government adhered to Lebanon's right to use the army and the resistance – namely Hizballah – for ending Israel's occupation and to disarm Palestinian groups – and not Hizballah – residing in Lebanon.⁸⁹⁵

Hizballah's policy of "walking on the edge" has proved itself successful in a way that it was able to transform its status from a terrorist and guerrilla organisation that rejects Lebanon's political system, into a legitimate political party that led the governing coalition since 2011. Hirst best summarises Hizballah's current status when he writes that the organisation continues to re-arm, recruit and train on an unprecedented scale, remains the most capable and powerful military and political force in Lebanon.⁸⁹⁶

INTERNATIONAL FACTORS

Hizballah is a terrorist and guerrilla organisation that has been affected by international factors, and these greatly influenced its actions and behaviour. Evidently, pivotal events that impact the world order, most notably the 9/11 attacks, had minimal effect on Hizballah. However, state sponsorship, namely

⁸⁹⁴ Azani, "Hezbollah's Strategy of "Walking on the Edge", p. 751

⁸⁹⁵ Draft ministerial statement of the Lebanese cabinet headed by Najib Mikati, 8/7/2011: <http://www.nowlebanon.com/NewsArchiveDetails.aspx?ID=289465> (accessed 13/8/2012)

⁸⁹⁶ Hirst, p. 426

from Iran and Syria, and the involvement of international institutions with Hizballah and Lebanon-related matters, had significantly affected the organisation's strategy and attitude towards political integration.

In the aftermath of 9/11, the US implemented a neo-conservative strategy that was intended to transform the political, economic, religious and cultural environments of the Middle East. The *raison d'être* was that assisting Muslim states to adopt freedom and democracy, market capitalism, the rule of law and human rights, would turn them into peace-loving nations that no longer posed a threat to the US and its interests in the region.⁸⁹⁷

A complementary strategy, known as the "War on Terror" was declared by American President George W. Bush, just days after the attacks: 'Our war on terror begins with al-Qaeda, but it does not end there. It will not end until every terrorist group of global reach has been found, stopped and defeated.'⁸⁹⁸ Although Hizballah fits Bush's criteria, and has long been on the US list of terrorist groups, American military powers were directed neither towards the Shiite organisation nor its state sponsors, Iran and Syria.⁸⁹⁹ The 9/11 attacks did, however, emphasise Hizballah's terrorist nature, and additional states such as Canada, Australia, and several European nations, classified the organisation as a terrorist entity.⁹⁰⁰

In fact, the US welcomed Hizballah's participation in Lebanese politics. Byman explains that after the 9/11 attacks, the American administration hoped it:

⁸⁹⁷ Ibid, pp. 280-281

⁸⁹⁸ Transcript of President Bush's address to a joint session of Congress on Thursday night, September 20, 2001: <http://edition.cnn.com/2001/US/09/20/gen.bush.transcript/> (accessed 2/9/2012)

⁸⁹⁹ Since October 1997 Hizballah is a designated foreign terrorist organisation according to US State Department list of terrorist groups (last updated September 2012); <http://www.state.gov/j/ct/rls/other/des/123085.htm> (accessed 1/10/12)

⁹⁰⁰ The UK proscribed Hizballah's military wing as a terrorist group, thus distinguishing between its terrorist attacks and political actions within Lebanon (last update 23/11/2012); <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/publications/counter-terrorism/proscribed-terror-groups/terror-groups-proscribed?view=Binary> (accessed 1/12/12)

...would set off a virtuous cycle, as Hizballah's continuing political success would depend on its ability to bring stability and prosperity to its Lebanese constituents instead of on its violent efforts against Israel and the United States.⁹⁰¹

The optimism demonstrated by the American desire to tame Hizballah through political participation, particularly in the post-9/11 period when unyielding counter-terrorism policy was implemented by states, had been shattered when Nasrallah said in an interview with a Kuwaiti newspaper in November 2001:

After September 11, the United States thought that we would be scared to death, so they sent us intermediaries with the hope that after September 11 we would be willing to give up what we had previously refused to...we need to stress that our options and positions have not changed after September 11, and will not change in the future from they were prior to September 11.⁹⁰²

Nonetheless, Hizballah was fully aware of the risk of being labeled as a terrorist organisation in the post-9/11 international environment. Consequently, it tried to shrug off accusations of its involvement in the attacks, by condemning al-Qaeda and strongly denying any links to attacks against American interests. Instead, Hizballah highlighted that its military actions are confined to the Israel-Lebanon-Palestinian conflict.⁹⁰³

But in reality Hizballah did not limit its operations to Israel and the Palestinian territories. In its eyes, the American invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq, in 2001 and 2003 respectively, and the Israeli re-conquering of the West Bank in 2002 under US tacit approval, confirmed Hizballah's convictions that the US and Israel 'are preparing for a showdown against the Muslims in the region,' and therefore 'this conspiracy calls for a maximum effort of resistance

⁹⁰¹ Byman, "Should Hezbollah be Next?", p. 66

⁹⁰² Noe, pp. 257, 260

⁹⁰³ Harb, Mona & Leenders, Reinoud. "Know thy enemy: Hizbullah, 'terrorism' and the politics of Perception", *Third World Quarterly* (26:1, February 2005), pp. 179-180

and *Jihad*.⁹⁰⁴ Evidently, Hizballah remained loyal to its ideology and long after the 9/11 attacks it continued its military conflict with Israel and provided assistance to the *Jihadist* movements in Iraq that were fighting the American-led forces. Hizballah embarked on these missions when it was already part of the Lebanese executive cabinet, a fact that according to American analysts should have moderated Hizballah's objectives and strategy.

While the 9/11 attacks did not significantly affect Hizballah's attitudes towards military confrontation, any change in the geo-strategic position of its sponsors, Iran and Syria, has a direct impact on its behaviour inside and outside Lebanon. Both states, which are considered as part of a radical alliance, perceive Hizballah as a strategic asset and an effective tool to achieve their national security and political objectives. Since Hizballah has been used for years as their proxy, its ability to make independent decisions is limited and it had to coordinate its policy and actions with its state-sponsors.⁹⁰⁵ In return for its services at the behest of its patrons, Hizballah enjoys financial assistance, strong political backing, logistical and training support and supply of advanced weapons that allow it to maintain its superiority within Lebanon and to seriously challenge Israel's qualitative military advantage.

The symbiotic relations between Hizballah and its sponsors have been comprehensively investigated and discussed. However, in an era when the phenomenon of states that sponsor terrorism is significantly declining, the question of what would become of Hizballah without its Iranian and Syrian support is under-researched. In the Middle East's current political atmosphere, famously known as the "Arab Spring", it is not unimaginable that Hizballah's ties with Iran and Syria will be severed. Iran and Syria, together and separately, are facing tremendous challenges to the nature and existence of their regime that remove Hizballah from their list of top strategic priorities.

⁹⁰⁴ Karmon, Ely. "Iran-Syria-Hizballah-Hamas: A Coalition Against Nature, Why Does it Work?", *The Proteus Monographic Series* (1:5, May 2008), p. 44

⁹⁰⁵ "Hezbollah: special information paper (part 2)", *Intelligence and Terrorism Information Center* (July 2003)

Commonalities between Iran and Hizballah have been thoroughly studied, namely strong religious ideology combined with radical strategy that uses violence and political manipulation to achieve their objectives. The robust and durable relations between the two Shiite entities led to impressive achievements that, according to Ely Karmon, could not have been materialised if not for American, European and Israeli 'lack of strategic vision and/or political courage and their resultant botched counter-terrorism strategies.'⁹⁰⁶ Yet, no matter how strong and successful the relations are, in the case of Iran, there are at least two plausible scenarios in which the patron will stop sponsoring its client: either because it cannot do so anymore or Hizballah will decide to prefer the Lebanese over the Iranian agenda.

Since 2003 the world's attention has been directed towards Iran's nuclear programme. As part of a broad effort to prevent Iran from developing an atomic bomb, numerous international sanctions have been imposed, aimed at pressuring the Iranian regime to suspend its enrichment and other nuclear-related activities. The sanctions mainly forbid exports of petroleum products, sales of military equipment, proliferation of missile and nuclear technology, business dealings with several Iranian banks, as well as impose travel ban and asset freezing against key Iranian individuals and companies. Although in the past, Iranian leaders repeatedly denounced the sanctions 'as desperate measures doomed to fail or backfire,' by the end of 2012 government officials already admitted that sanctions are having an effect on Iran's economy.⁹⁰⁷ Also according to the International Monetary Fund, financial indicators suggest that 'Iran's economy has gone into recession for the first time in two decades,' and consequently Iranian President Ahmadinejad 'seems terminally weakened by his handling of the crisis.'⁹⁰⁸

⁹⁰⁶ Karmon, p. 82

⁹⁰⁷ Gladstone, Rick. "Iran Admits Western Sanction Are Inflicting Damage", *The New York Times* (20/11/2012)

⁹⁰⁸ "A comeback for the reformers?", *The Economist* (405:8806, 13/10/2012), p. 41

Now that it is clear the sanctions have taken their toll, the annual multi-million-dollars aid that Iran has been providing Hizballah since the 1980s is no longer guaranteed. Reports from late 2011 suggest that Iran already informed Hizballah that due to its commitment to support the Syrian regime and its own failing economy, it will not be able to provide the annual financial backing to the organisation, which is estimated in approximately \$350 million (other estimations are between \$100-\$150 million).⁹⁰⁹ Under such circumstances, Hizballah would be compelled to rely on its own sources of income, mainly extensive fundraising apparatus that includes both legitimate religious and social charities, illegal drug trafficking, currency counterfeiting and trading African "Blood diamonds".⁹¹⁰

Undoubtedly, the funding issue is an important pillar in the Iran-Hizballah relationship. The generous financial support not only assisted in developing army-like capabilities, but also contributed amply to the steady increase of Hizballah's popularity.⁹¹¹ It is reasonable to argue that without similar Iranian investments in Hizballah, the benefits for the latter from the long-standing relations with Iran would be considerably diminished. Equally, Hizballah's level of commitment to Iran would be far less obligating.

Another possible opportunity for Hizballah to renounce its loyalty to Iran is in the event that Lebanon's national interests contradict Iran's potential desire to use Hizballah. The most plausible scenario for Hizballah to launch a military campaign on behalf of Iran is in retaliation for an air-strike against its nuclear, military and strategic installations, either by the US or Israel. Currently, it seems that an American attack is probable should the diplomatic negotiations fail. American President Barak Obama threatened in March 2012 that it would be 'a profound national-security interest of the United States to

⁹⁰⁹ "Iran cutting financial aid to Hezbollah: report", *The Daily Star* (12/10/2011)

⁹¹⁰ Blanford, p. 356

⁹¹¹ According to Amal Saad-Ghorayeb of the Lebanese newspaper *Al-Akhbar*, Iran provided Hizballah \$1.2 billion after the second Lebanon War, of which \$300 million were paid as compensation to families who lost their homes. For more information on Iran's funding of Hizballah, read Saad-Ghorayeb, Amal. "Hezbollah's Iran Money Trail: It's Complicated", *Al-Akhbar* (31/7/2012); <http://english.al-akhbar.com/node/10553> (accessed 30/10/12)

prevent Iran from getting a nuclear weapon,' and warned that 'when the United States says it is unacceptable for Iran to have a nuclear weapon, we mean what we say.'⁹¹²

Bearing in mind the lethality of a possible strike against Iran, it is reasonable to assume that Iran would be compelled to respond with every available means. In such a case, it is commonly believed that Hizballah would be ordered by Iran to retaliate on its behalf by launching massive barrages of rockets onto Israel. Blanford supports this argument pointing that the billions of dollars that Iran provided Hizballah was not an 'altruistic gift,' and that in return Iran uses Hizballah as 'a bridgehead on Israel's northern border, enhancing its deterrence posture and expanding its retaliatory options in the event of an attack on the Islamic Republic.'⁹¹³ Hence, after an attack on Iran, Hizballah would be expected to abide by the Supreme Leader's request and justify, in actions, the many years of financial support and weapons deliveries from Iran.

However, Hizballah in the second decade of the 21st century is a very different organisation than the one of the last decade of the 20th century. Due to its current political standing in Lebanon, it is not certain that it would automatically meet Iran's expectations. The Shiite organisation is no longer 'the ragtag Iranian proxy militia,' but has grown into 'the dominant political and military actor in Lebanon,' with distinct national and commercial interests.⁹¹⁴ Therefore, Hizballah is unlikely to sacrifice its future for Iran's political and regional aspirations and risk dragging Lebanon and its people, yet again, into another war with Israel, which would possibly inflict irrecoverable damage to the organisation. This notion was supported by a senior IDF intelligence officer, who stated in March 2013 that if Israel or the US would attack Iran's nuclear

⁹¹² Goldberg, Jeffrey. "Obama to Iran and Israel: As President of the United States, I don't bluff", *The Atlantic* (2/3/2012); <http://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/03/obama-to-iran-and-israel-as-president-of-the-united-states-i-dont-bluff/253875/> (accessed 15/5/2012)

⁹¹³ Blanford, pp. 482-483

⁹¹⁴ Ibid, p. 482

facilities, Hizballah would not automatically retaliate against Israel. In his view, Hizballah is:

A Lebanese-Arab-Muslim organisation operating in a multi-religious state. It is not only a military organisation but also a political one, and therefore it never acts automatically. It is not subordinate to the Iranian Supreme Leader, and its portrayal as another Iranian division is wholly inaccurate.⁹¹⁵

The issues of Hizballah's loyalty and its Iranian identity have been a source of dispute for many years among the Lebanese people. As part of the "Lebanonisation" process that Hizballah underwent in the 1990s and the early 2000s, it invested great efforts to convince the Lebanese public opinion that it is, first and foremost, an autonomous national organisation committed above all for safeguarding Lebanon's interests. Nasrallah told the Lebanese daily newspaper *Al-Safir* in 2006, that he does not 'need to make Hizballah more Lebanese than it already is,' since its members demonstrated the 'highest form of patriotism' when they shed their blood for the 'land, the motherland, and the people.'⁹¹⁶ Nowadays, when Hizballah is a legitimate and influential member in Lebanon's cabinet, it holds certain responsibilities to promote the interests of the Lebanese people and state. No matter how deep Iranian ideology is instilled in its members, the organisation is comprised of Lebanese citizens, operates on Lebanese land, and is committed to Lebanon as its homeland. Even the historical ties with Iran cannot undermine Hizballah's loyalty to its constituency.

The case of Syria's support to Hizballah is slightly different, yet it is no less important for Hizballah's current political and military dominance in Lebanon. Contrary to Iranian interest in having a Shiite proxy in Lebanon, Syria's claim to a foothold in Lebanon dates back to the Ottoman Empire. Once under single territory known as Greater Syria, with the fall of the Empire the territory was divided and Syria and Lebanon were turned into separate

⁹¹⁵ Fishman, Alex. "Fire Scouts", *Yedioth Ahronot* (29/3/2013), p. 6 (Hebrew)

⁹¹⁶ Noe, p. 160

countries that gained independence from France in the 1940s. Ever since, both states have had strained relations that were derived from Syria's refusal to recognise Lebanon's sovereignty. The fact that official diplomatic ties between the two states were established, for the first time, in October 2008, proves the turbulent affairs throughout the years.⁹¹⁷

In June 1976 Syria sent its troops into Lebanon, at the request of the Lebanese president, to assist in restoring law and order, after armed clashes between Christian and Muslim militias erupted a year before. Yet, soon afterwards Syria turned its allegiance against the Christians and allied with the Palestinians and Shiites.⁹¹⁸ The Syrian presence in Lebanon remained for nearly 30 years, and President Hafez al-Assad effectively controlled Lebanon, politically and economically, through his forces on the ground. During this time, Syria brokered the "Taif Agreement" which ended the civil war and established itself as the de-facto ruler of Lebanon. Although Hizballah initially objected to the agreement, it accommodated itself to the reality of the *Pax Syriana*. In return for its pragmatism it was exempted from being dismantled and was allowed to maintain its status as the only armed resistance organisation in Lebanon.⁹¹⁹ Clearly, while Hizballah's loyalty to Iran lies in the shared ideology and strategy, its relations with Syria are a result of a rational concession born out of necessity.

Unlike Iran, Syria has neither a revolutionary vision to export nor a wealthy economy that is based on oil and gas revenues. What it did have plenty of, at least until the mid-2000s, was political control over Lebanon and advanced weapons. In the developing relations, Hizballah offered Syria an effective and lethal low-intensity tool to be used as part of its intractable conflict with Israel, and in return Syria provided political backing and Russian-manufactured advanced weapons. Also, Syria served as a strategic bridgehead

⁹¹⁷ "Syria and Lebanon Set Up Formal Ties", *The New York Times* (14/10/2008); <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/10/15/world/middleeast/15syria.html> (accessed 23/8/2012)

⁹¹⁸ Zisser, *Lebanon Blood in the Cedar's*, pp. 66-76

⁹¹⁹ Blanford, pp. 92-95

connecting Iran to Hizballah, and facilitated deliveries of more weapons, money and aid from the Islamic Republic.⁹²⁰

Similar to Hizballah's problem with Iran's that stem from the latter's current geo-political situation, its relations with Syria are also in danger. Specifically, the withdrawal of Syrian forces from Lebanon in mid-2005 and the on-going civil war in Syria that poses an imminent threat to al-Assad's regime, may leave Hizballah, for the first time, without the backing of a state-sponsor.

Following the assassination of Prime Minister Hariri in February 2005, domestic and international pressure forced Syria to pull out its forces from Lebanon. Hizballah mobilised its supporters to prevent such a move, knowing well that should Syria leave Lebanon it will lose its political and military backing. Just days after the assassination, Nasrallah spoke in a crowded rally and thanked the Syrian army for standing by Lebanon's side against Israeli invasions. He personally referred to President al-Assad: 'your presence in Lebanon is not material or military; you are present in our hearts and souls, and in our past, present, and future. No one can expel Syria from Lebanon, or from the Lebanese people's minds, hearts, and future.'⁹²¹

Despite Hizballah's efforts to maintain Syria's presence in Lebanon, the demand of anti-Syrian Lebanese and international pressure were stronger. Contrary to its fears, Hizballah benefitted from the pull out of Syrian forces from Lebanon: it became much more independent in planning its next moves and executing its actions; and it was free from Syrian efforts to limit its popular and political growth. The geographical distance between Beirut and Damascus not only allowed Hizballah more flexibility on the ground, but also removed

⁹²⁰ Samii, Abbas-William. "A Stable Structure on Shifting Sands: Assessing the Hizballah-Iran-Syria Relationship", *Middle East Journal* (62:1, Winter 2008), pp. 38-40

⁹²¹ Noe, p. 321

Syria's ability to put pressure on and threaten Hizballah if it goes astray from its regional strategy.⁹²²

Evidently, Hizballah wisely used the absence of Syria to assimilate itself into Lebanon's power structure, and invested more resources to increase its base of support. It is not surprising then, that between 2005 and 2011, Hizballah was able to transform itself from an opposition party in the parliament, into the leading political force in the state that controls the executive branch.

The recent Syrian uprising, which began in March 2011, is a more challenging problem for Hizballah since it might lead to a regime change that will cut off entirely the patron-client relations. The uprising, which by now has deteriorated into a full-scale civil war, is a result of popular unrest that spread across the Arab world since December 2010. The disappointment with the political, economic and social position of their states led protestors to take to the streets and demanded significant improvement in their quality of life. Thanks to Syria's strict security measures and the loyalty of the army, President al-Assad was able to keep its "kingdom at silence", at least during the first months.⁹²³ However, the people's will was stronger than its president's, and bloody armed clashes broke out that already cost the lives of more than a hundred thousand people. The number of casualties will grow exponentially if chemical and biological weapons will be used again by the Syrian army against the rebels.

The situation in Syria puts Hizballah in a complex dilemma. On the one hand, to maintain its power in Lebanon it needs Syria's political assistance and supply of weapons. On the other hand, openly supporting al-Assad, particularly in a period that Arab citizens are protesting against the tyranny and corruption

⁹²² Perthes, Volker. "The Syrian Solution", *Foreign Affairs* (85:6, November/December 2006), pp. 33-40

⁹²³ "Syria: 'A kingdom of silence'", *Al-Jazeera* (9/2/2011); <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2011/02/201129103121562395.html> (accessed 23/8/2012)

of their autocratic regimes, could considerably reduce Hizballah's popularity among Lebanese. After carefully weighing his options, it seems that Nasrallah chose to prevent a sectarian anti-Shiite backlash and isolation of Hizballah, and implicitly called for al-Assad to lay down his arms, stop targeting civilians and seek a political solution.⁹²⁴ At the same time, it sent its combatants to assist the Syrian army against the rebels. Acknowledging the risks of being associated with al-Assad's ruthless campaign against his own people, Hizballah increasingly struggled to conceal the fact that it had been providing to the Syrian army training and extensive logistical support and that its fighters were part of the regime's "killing machine".⁹²⁵

Under these circumstances, it would be reasonable for Hizballah to opt for saving its constituency at home and sacrifice its long-time Syrian ally who is perceived by Arabs and the world as a cruel dictator who is killing his people and his days in office are numbered. While Hizballah could afford losing Syria at its side, it cannot survive without its domestic political power and public support.

Lastly, despite its formidable political and military powers, Hizballah is not immune to international intervention. As such, UN decisions that affected Lebanon's political stability and security situation, had also significant impact on Hizballah's standing and actions. Most notable is the issue of Hizballah disarmament, which is not only part of Lebanon's political discourse, but also a source for great international concern. Consequently, several UN Security Council resolutions called for the disbanding and disarmament of Lebanese and non-Lebanese militias, but were actually targeting Hizballah.⁹²⁶ Furthermore, UN Secretary-General, Ban Ki-Moon, expressed in several occasions his concern that Hizballah still retains its independent armed capabilities, which by now far

⁹²⁴ Bernard, Anne. "Loyalty to Syrian President Could Isolate Hezbollah", *The New York Times* (5/4/2012); <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/04/06/world/middleeast/hezbollahs-syria-policy-puts-it-at-risk.html?pagewanted=all&r=1&> (accessed 10/10/2012)

⁹²⁵ Levitt, Matthew. *Hezbollah: The Global Footprint of Lebanon's Party of God* (Washington Dc: Georgetown University Press, 2013), pp. 370-371

⁹²⁶ For example: UNSCR 1559 (2004), UNSCR 1680 (2006), UNSCR 1701 (2006).

exceeds those of the state. In January 2012, while visiting Lebanon, he said: 'I am deeply concerned about the military capability of Hizballah and the lack of progress in disarmament...all these arms outside the authorised state authority, it's not acceptable.'⁹²⁷

Expectedly, Hizballah denounces the legitimacy of such resolutions and repeatedly claims that the decision to disarm the organisation should only be made through a national dialogue between Lebanon's community leaders, who will determine the state's national defence strategy. In a speech in March 2005, Nasrallah publicly declared, that:

...we are here to reject resolution 1559 and defend the resistance, the option of resistance, and the duty and weapons of the resistance...If democracy is synonymous with majority opinion, then the majority here [in Lebanon] rejects Resolution 1559.⁹²⁸

Furthermore, Nasrallah exploits the fact that a weak and divided Lebanese government would not assume responsibility to implement any UN resolutions, which allows Hizballah to continue receiving weapons from Syria and Iran without any interference. Even the UNIFIL peacekeeping force stationed in south Lebanon since 1978 could not do anything to prevent Hizballah's re-arming. Although, theoretically UNIFIL holds the necessary manpower and means to stop the supply of weapons to Hizballah, this task it is not officially included in its mandate without the consent of the Lebanese government. Clearly, UNIFIL has no desire to confront Hizballah militarily, since it would probably lead to casualties, which the contributing states will not tolerate.⁹²⁹

The second international decision that indirectly refers to Hizballah is the establishment of the Special Tribunal for Lebanon (SLT), under UN Security Council Resolution 1595 (2005), to investigate the assassination of Prime

⁹²⁷ "Ban Ki-Moon 'deeply concerned' at Hezbollah arms, tells Lebanon to disarm the group", *Al-Arabia News* (31/1/2012); <http://english.alarabiya.net/articles/2012/01/13/188161.html> (accessed 14/9/2012)

⁹²⁸ Noe, pp. 324-325

⁹²⁹ Hirst, p. 388

Minister Hariri.⁹³⁰ From its outset, it was clear to all parties involved that referring the investigation to an international body would cause political instability in Lebanon. The SLT came into effect after a preliminary UN investigative report published in October 2005, determined that 'there is converging evidence pointing at both Lebanese and Syrian involvement in this terrorist attack.'⁹³¹ Following the report, Prime Minister Siniora requested the establishment of the international tribunal.

Both the UN resolution and the establishment of the SLT pose a great risk for Hizballah. Besides the obvious public rejection, the organisation was forced to act to prevent any concrete effects on its status. The path that Hizballah chose was not to deal with the international actors responsible for the intervention in Lebanon's internal affairs, rather to deepen its political participation within the government to have a better control over decisions that might relinquish its power. However, when Hizballah realised that there are matters that it cannot influence even while in the government, it turned against the SLT. Clearly, Hizballah did not want international prosecutors asking questions that their answers might contribute to its demise.⁹³²

In response to the SLT approval, in November 2006 Nasrallah ordered the five Shiite ministers to resign from their governmental positions. The resignation was the ostensible reason for Lebanon's deterioration into a political turmoil. For almost two years Prime Minister Siniora's government was dysfunctional and the institutional crisis led to growing tensions and hostility that eventually exploded in the armed clashes in May 2008. Although Hizballah proved its political power and ability to effectively control the government, the SLT's work continued to its dismay.⁹³³ In a last effort to stop

⁹³⁰ For details about the STL visit: <http://www.stl-tsl.org/>

⁹³¹ Report of the International Independent Investigation Commission (19/10/2005), p. 61

⁹³² Azani, "Hezbollah's Strategy of "Walking on the Edge", pp. 748-749

⁹³³ Gerges, Fawaz. "Lebanon is staring into the abyss", *The Guardian* (31/12/2010); <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2010/dec/31/lebanon-brink-rafik-hariri-tribunal-hezbollah> (accessed 24/10/12)

Lebanese cooperation with the STL, Nasrallah appealed to his public and asked them:

...to boycott those investigators and refrain from cooperating with them because all that is presented is passed to the Israelis...Continued cooperation helps to desecrate the country and assaults the resistance.⁹³⁴

Despite the efforts, in January 2011 the STL published its intention to indict several people in Hariri's murder. At that stage, their names remained confidential, but media speculations suggested that they might be of Hizballah members. Since Prime Minister Sa'ad Hariri refused to convene the cabinet to discuss the ways to deal with the indictments, Hizballah staged another walkout of its ministers that led to the fall of his government.⁹³⁵

In June 2011 the names were finally revealed, and as speculated earlier, they were of Hizballah members. As expected, Hizballah refused to hand them over to the SLT 'not even in 300 years' as Nasrallah vowed. Yet, knowing that Lebanon is in a very fragile political situation, he promised that there will not be a civil war 'because there is a responsible government in Lebanon that will not act with revenge.'⁹³⁶ Nevertheless, the indictment of Hizballah members and the international pressure on the organisation to extradite them and to disarm its weapons put a heavy burden on its shoulders.

For the above reasons, Hizballah is a source for great international interest. In several western states, mainly the US and its allies, Hizballah is considered as the main problem to the institutional instability in Lebanon in the past two decades. Nevertheless, no direct action has been taken to solve the

⁹³⁴ Black, Ian. "Lebanon politicians attack hezbollah over boycott call", *The Guardian* (29/10/2012); <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2010/oct/29/lebanon-hezbollah-hariri-tribunal-boycott> (accessed 24/10/12)

⁹³⁵ Chulov, Martin. "Lebanon reels hezbollah topples government", *The Guardian* (12/1/2012); <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/jan/12/lebanon-reels-hezbollah-topples-government> (accessed 24/10/12)

⁹³⁶ "Hezbollah leader refuses handover Hariri suspects", *The Guardian* (3/7/2012); <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/jul/03/hezbollah-leader-refuses-handover-hariri-suspects> (accessed 24/10/12)

"Hizballah problem". Under the insightful leadership of Nasrallah, Hizballah recognises that the international battlefield should not be fought across the ocean, but rather inside Lebanon. As such, Hizballah is working tirelessly to increase its political stronghold and at the same time to boost its popularity among Shiites and non-Shiites in Lebanon. Hizballah realises that in the face of heavy international pressure, no decision that will harm its status could be made, if the Lebanese people would stand by its side.

CONCLUSIONS

Hizballah is, by all means, a fascinating example in the study of terrorist organisations' integration into political systems. Although its background, ideology and strategy have been heavily researched, an in-depth analysis that combines organisational, domestic and international factors, provides a coherent tale as to how and why Hizballah is enjoying the best of both worlds. On one hand, it gained enough legitimate political power to appoint a Lebanese Prime Minister, while on the other, there is no domestic or external power that is capable or willing to disarm its weapons. Nonetheless, since Hizballah remains heavily involved in the Syrian civil war, plays some part in Iran's dialogue with the international community (though mostly indirect) and is facing criticism from its political rivals over its separate armed capabilities, the next few years could be very significant for the organisation's future course of action. As such, the extent of the impact of these issues is difficult to foresee and thus, instead of making predictions this study will outline and analyse possible scenarios for future political integration.

Examination of the organisational factors that affected Hizballah's transformation from violence to politics must be viewed in the context of Lebanon's political culture and the powerlessness of the Shiite community in the state's confessional government. The establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran enabled Hizballah to find its voice and begin its life as a resistance organisation as well as an alternative route to power for the Shiites in Lebanon. Although its ideology and strategy are still officially derived from Iran's

revolutionary doctrine, and specifically the religious narratives of *wilayat al-faqih* and violent *Jihad*, in the last two decades Hizballah undoubtedly underwent extraordinary changes.

As part of its efforts to appeal to wider constituencies and tighten its grip on Lebanon's political system, since 1992 Hizballah downplays its fundamental Islamic conviction. Although the duty of establishing an Islamic state as 'the natural expression of allegiance for any committed Muslim' is still valid, practically Hizballah recognises that such a development requires a proper accommodating foundation that the Lebanese people lack, and therefore they are 'free to choose their governing system and bear the responsibility for such choice.'⁹³⁷

Giving up one of its fundamental ideological narratives does not mean that Hizballah is wholeheartedly transforming its violent nature. Hizballah remains adamant to remind the Lebanese people that it is the only armed force in the state that can protect them from Israeli future attacks and deter Israel from invading Lebanon again. To that end, Hizballah perpetuates the territorial dispute with Israel that provides it with a rightful claim to stockpile and use arms. A peace agreement between Lebanon and Israel is probably Hizballah's worst nightmare, as it strips the Shiite organisation of its justification to preserve its exclusive resistance status and legitimacy to use violence against Lebanon's enemies.

In its application of violence Hizballah demonstrated innovative, yet no less lethal, tactics that involve the use of advanced weapons. The use of coordinated suicide attacks against embassies, military barracks and public centres, massive barrages of rockets and missiles onto civilian areas, and abduction of foreign nationals inside and outside Lebanon, is certainly unique in the history of terrorism. At the same time, its fire power could not be compared to any other armed non-state actor. In a US Congress hearing held after the Second Lebanon War, one expert testified that 'perhaps more than any

⁹³⁷ Blanford, pp. 30-31

other terrorist organization, Hezbollah is highly skilled at getting results using terrorism.'⁹³⁸

Clearly, Hizballah recognises the potential destructive power of its weapons. Therefore, it maintains a rigid command and control structure aimed at avoiding any unauthorized attacks that might lead not only to unintended casualties, but mainly to political and international pressures that could jeopardise Hizballah's interests and objectives. The combination of careful planning and surgical execution of armed attacks with advanced weapons and well-trained and devoted fighters greatly contributes to Hizballah's deterrence capability.

In order to maintain its status as an independent armed organisation and not being forced to disband and to hand the weapons over to Lebanon's army, Hizballah needs to maintain some level of conflict with Israel. Any signs of rapprochement between Israel and Lebanon may risk Hizballah's distinctive status. Therefore, it uses every opportunity to remind the Lebanese people of the devilish nature of the neighbouring Zionist state and denies its right to exist. In Nasrallah's view, 'Israel is an illegal and usurper entity built on false pretence, on massacres, and on delusions, and has therefore no chance of survival.'⁹³⁹

Similarly, Hizballah uses virulent rhetoric against the US. According to Matthew Levitt, Hizballah distributed video tapes in which men vowed to detonate themselves to cause the earth to shake under the feet of Americans, chanting "death to America" and promising that the spirit of *Jihad* still exists in their hearts.⁹⁴⁰ Contrary to the hopes of statesmen and the assertions of scholars, active participation in Lebanon's political process did not moderate Hizballah's views of Israel and the US. While in many other areas Hizballah accepts and adheres to the rules of the "political game", the incitement and

⁹³⁸ "Hezbollah's Global Reach", p. 65

⁹³⁹ Noe, pp. 206-207

⁹⁴⁰ Levitt, pp. 159-160

aggression towards the Little and Great Devils go beyond the mainstream discourse.

Perhaps the one organisational factor that stands out as missing in Hizballah's integration process into Lebanon's political system is the lack of competition from other dominant and rival Shiite organisations. Hizballah itself was founded as a result of an ideological disagreement within the Amal movement that fragmented the Shiite community in Lebanon. Soon after it broke off, Hizballah became more radical and powerful and succeeded in gaining ground, political influence and members at the expense of Amal.⁹⁴¹ Since then, Hizballah had not been seriously challenged by other Shiite factions that may pose a threat to its political and public prominence.

Nonetheless, Hizballah cannot allow itself to sit idly by when facing such geo-political turbulences in Lebanon and the entire region. Should internal disagreements occur, for instance over the stand that the organisation adopts in relation to the Syrian civil war, it could possibly lead to a split in the organisation's ranks and the establishment of a rival group. Since Hizballah already faced the danger of an internal split, over the question of whether to participate in the 1992 elections, but managed to survive, its leaders are closely monitoring any signs that indicate ideological and strategic disagreements and may surface. Nowadays, it seems that Hizballah is bent on resolving such differences "in-house", while presenting a unified front and consistent agenda to its members and supporters. Yet, at the pace and intensity of the ongoing events and process in the Middle-East, it is difficult to predict if Hizballah would be able to retain its position as the most powerful Shiite grassroots organisation for long.

Finally, it is clear that Hizballah's political prominence could not have been achieved without understanding the importance of public support. Almost every aspect of Hizballah's decisions and actions is viewed through the effect that it would have on its popularity. Soon after it was established, Hizballah

⁹⁴¹ Ibid, p. 250

aimed at garnering the support, first and foremost, of the Shiite community (though not exclusively) in Lebanon by investing substantial resources in social infrastructure and welfare services.⁹⁴² By offering and providing financial aid, medical care, education, vocational training and employment, services that the state was unable or unwilling to supply, Hizballah became the most effective and efficient political and social organisation in Lebanon.⁹⁴³

Parallel to operating its vast social and public network, Hizballah uses a wide range of communication methods to reach out to audiences that are beyond Lebanon's geographic borders. The organisation operates several media outlets and internet websites that disseminate its ideology and messages, recruit new members, bolster public support and even raise funds. Such a communication network is one of the most important assets of Hizballah (alongside its weapons arsenal), and it would protect it at almost any cost as this is the organisation's main channel to promote and expand its influence.

When it comes to the domestic level, it is clear that Israel's security policy had greatly influenced Hizballah's current political and military status. In fact, Israel's short-sighted strategy as well as operational and tactical blunders in dealing with Hizballah, contributed to its elevation to the status of Lebanon's most powerful organisation.

Indeed, as much as Hizballah needs Israel to prolong its position as a resistance organisation, Israel wishes to remove it from its list of enemies. As long as the Shiite organisation exists it will be a constant reminder for Israel's colossal failure in dealing with the "Hizballah problem". First and foremost, Israel has been ineffective in designing an articulated policy framework as well as clearly defining its security and political interests that have to be preserved when contending with the Shiite organisation. Essentially, this led to a limited, reactive and ambiguous strategy towards Hizballah that mostly neglected

⁹⁴² Azani, Eitan. "The Hybrid Terrorist Organisation: Hezbollah as a Case Study", *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* (36:11, October 2013), pp. 904-905

⁹⁴³ Wiegand, p. 673

political solutions to the conflict.⁹⁴⁴ According to Dror, Israel's policy in regards to Hizballah in particular and Lebanon in general, represents a systematic failure in which a set of actions leads to even worse ones. This stems from a lack of a grand-strategy that is the basis for significant decisions required to impact the processes that without any intervention, will harm Israel's interests and objectives.⁹⁴⁵

Israel's strategic blindness began with the establishment of the "Security Zone", which served as its *Maginot Line*. Instead of implementing an aggressive approach, Israel conveniently chose the option of military entrenchment that provided Hizballah's stand-off weapons large, static and vulnerable targets. This approach represented the government's reluctance to actively pursue Hizballah fighters outside the "Security Zone" that could cost the lives of many soldiers.⁹⁴⁶ However, clustering behind fortified outposts did not prevent casualties. Hizballah's attrition and the mounting number of dead Israelis led, once again, to a misconception that a unilateral withdrawal would provide Israel both legitimacy to respond to Hizballah provocations and an opportunity to re-gain its deterrence.

The idea of a withdrawal originated from the changes in the Israeli public consciousness that deemed the heavy death toll unnecessary when compared to the strategic value of Israeli presence on Lebanese soil.⁹⁴⁷ Despite the concerns that evacuating Lebanon without an agreement would leave northern Israel vulnerable to barrage of rockets, disrupt the citizen's daily lives and be perceived as if the IDF is running away or surrendering to terrorism, political considerations triumphed.

⁹⁴⁴ Raviv, Dan & Melman, Yossi. *Spies Against Armageddon* (Tel Aviv: Yedioth Ahronot Books, 2012), pp. 295-308 (Hebrew)

⁹⁴⁵ Dror, Yechezkel. "Breakthrough Political and Military Grand-Strategy for Israel", *The Begin-Sadat Center* (2007), p.11 (Hebrew)

⁹⁴⁶ Amidror, Ya'akov. "The Necessary Conditions for Winning the War on Terrorism", *Ma'arachot IDF Magazine* (412, May 2007), pp. 35-36 (Hebrew)

⁹⁴⁷ Amidror, Ya'akov. "Can Army Defeat Terrorism?", *Ma'arachot IDF Magazine* (408, August 2006), p. 10 (Hebrew)

In May 2000 Israel unilaterally withdrew its forces from Lebanon, an act that was congratulated by the international community and was approved by the UN Secretary-General.⁹⁴⁸ In theory, Israel's move should have removed Hizballah's legitimacy to independently hold arms as there was no more Lebanese land to liberate from the hands of foreign occupation. However, instead of using the withdrawal to end the Lebanon-Israeli conflict, Hizballah is clinging to the disputed Shebba Farms as its primary reason for continuing its attacks on Israel, and for that the organisation has to maintain its weapons.

In response to Hizballah's continuous attacks, Israel adopted the containment strategy, later heavily criticised by a parliamentary inquiry committee, which concluded that although a legitimate policy decision, containment could lead an army to a tactical and operational system paralysis. Evidently, the containment strategy failed to prevent the 2006 Second Lebanon War. Hizballah's audacious attack provided Israel with the opportunity to re-shape its security strategy towards the organisation and to respond aggressively. Yet, the IDF's poor military performance raised doubts regarding the effectiveness of such strategy against Hizballah. The official inquiry commission set up by the Israeli executive branch, concluded in April 2007 that in making the decision to go to war, the government did not consider the whole range of options to achieve its declared objectives. By and large, this failure reflects a weakness in strategic thinking.⁹⁴⁹

Many Israeli decision-makers, both politicians and senior ranking military officers, wish that Hizballah would somehow disappear off the face of the earth. However, their policies from the early 1980s onwards have directly contributed to Hizballah's current status. On one hand, Israel was unable to offer any political alternative to convince Hizballah, its supporters or the Lebanese government that their objectives could be better served through

⁹⁴⁸ The full text of the Report of the Secretary-General, can be viewed at: <http://unispal.un.org/UNISPAL.NSF/0/736411AF9BC6369585256903004F90C1> (accessed 12/12/2010)

⁹⁴⁹ "The Winograd Commission of Inquiry", Interim Report, p. 118

peaceful means. On the other hand, refusing to deal with Hizballah politically and insisting on using strictly military power, provided it with the legitimacy and justification to acquire and operate independent armed capabilities outside the reach of the Lebanese state. Hizballah's achievements on the battlefield, and specifically Israel's unilateral withdrawal which was perceived as the single greatest military achievement of an Arab entity against the IDF, further reinforced its political status and popularity among the various ethnic communities in Lebanon and across the Middle-East. Undoubtedly, the thousands of advanced weapons ready-to-be-used on demand in the hands of a legitimate political party are evidence that past Israeli strategies to let them rust in storage had failed miserably.

Lebanon's political approach towards Hizballah is similar to Israel's in the sense that it relies solely on one alternative – accommodating Hizballah without developing any effective leverage against it. Since Hizballah entered politics in 1992, successive Lebanese governments refused to truly challenge it, although the risk posed by its armed capabilities was visible to all. From the outset Hizballah understood that only a Lebanese government backed by the people and significant international pressure could force the organisation to give up its weapons and to totally adhere to political means. To make sure that this will not happen, Hizballah constantly attempted to increase its influence within the political system in order to be able to actively shape the decision-making process.

Until 2005 Hizballah felt relatively safe in the Lebanese balance-of-power and was able to maintain its political power while keeping its weapons. However, the pressure mounted gradually after the Hariri's assassination and the withdrawal of the Syrian forces and peaked in the Second Lebanon War, which began with a Hizballah provocation and almost dragged the entire Middle-East into a regional war. Although it was not defeated militarily by Israel, a closer look suggests that the war may prove to be as a Pyrrhic victory for the organisation. Since the war brought to the fore, once again, the issue of

disarmament, Hizballah was compelled to 'take another unwanted but necessary step into the unforgiving morass of Lebanese politics.'⁹⁵⁰

The public criticism after the war and the fear of a governmental decision to disarm Hizballah were the most important factors that directly influenced the organisation's political perspective. Nowadays, Hizballah is more involved in Lebanese politics and has more responsibility, and therefore it would be much more difficult for it to drag Lebanon into another war against Israel. The significance of such a position is momentous as it could signal the beginning of the end of Hizballah as a resistance organisation.

Investigation of the impact of the international system on Hizballah's political integration reveals that the decline in state-sponsorship and external intervention plays an important role in its decision and actions. First and foremost, Hizballah remains dependent upon Syria's and Iran's political, military, financial and logistical support. The collapse of the Syrian state is a devastating blow to Hizballah's strategic alliance, and the organisation is trying to salvage whatever it can from its ailing patron, namely advanced weapons and perhaps even chemical agents.

Evidently, Hizballah's political power in Lebanon is currently diminishing since it has decided to support the Syrian President and to send its combatants to aid his army in its war against the rebels. Indeed, many Lebanese blame Hizballah for recklessness and for 'acting as a pawn of Iran and Syria,' and these could certainly lead to a loss of credibility and eventually to its desolation.⁹⁵¹ Others in Lebanon wonder why Hizballah, which was established as a resistance organisation against Israel, is using its formidable power to suppress a popular rebellion of fellow Arab brothers against a tyrant.⁹⁵² However, the imminent fall of Bashar al-Assad's regime could also be an opportunity for Hizballah to strengthen its position as a Lebanese organisation

⁹⁵⁰ Blanford, p. xiv

⁹⁵¹ Phillips, p. 61

⁹⁵² Bergman, Ronen. "Nasrallah's Demons", *Yedioth Ahronot* (16/11/2012), p. 32

operating within a multi-religious state, and to reaffirm a more local and less externally-directed approach.

Hizballah's relations with Iran are more complex and under different circumstances could pose a genuine threat to its survival. It seems that Hizballah was quick to analyse the geo-strategic situation in the Middle-East, and specifically the problematic position of Iran, and despite Iran's strong religious and operational influence, the Lebanese-Shiite organisation gradually blurs the Iranian authority and emphasises its commitment to Lebanon. Although Iran remains a central element in Hizballah's life, in the current organisational, domestic and international circumstances, it downplays Iran's role in its public statements and makes relatively scarce mention of it.⁹⁵³

The most important issue that could jeopardise Iran-Hizballah relations is the former's nuclear ambitions and their implications. Many analysts and Middle East experts state their fears that should Iran build a nuclear weapon, it could implement an even more aggressive foreign policy, touch off a regional nuclear arms-race and also provide such a capability to its terrorist proxies, most notably to Hizballah.⁹⁵⁴ Therefore, an international campaign, headed by the US, was launched to delay, and hopefully halt, Iran's nuclear programme. Although Iran claims that the sanctions are futile, indicators prove that Iran's economic and financial stability is deteriorating. Clearly the sanctions greatly affect Iran's financial liquidity, and therefore in such an escalating economic crisis Iran would probably not be able to provide Hizballah with "boxes of cash-money", as it previously did.⁹⁵⁵ Phillips points out that Hizballah has already taken steps to become more financially self-sufficient, thus acknowledging that Iran's material support would not last forever.⁹⁵⁶

⁹⁵³ Rosset, Uri. *Hizballah and Wilayat al-Faqih*, a working paper presented at the Herzliya Conference, Israel (February 2011)

⁹⁵⁴ Lindsay, James & Takeyh, Ray. "After Iran Gets the Bomb", *Foreign Affairs* (89:2, March/April 2010), pp. 33-49

⁹⁵⁵ Blanford, p. 52

⁹⁵⁶ Phillips, p. 47

Finally, it is apparent that despite its political power and popularity Hizballah is not strong enough to prevent international intervention in Lebanon's internal affairs. Even though Hizballah fiercely opposed the establishment of the special tribunal to investigate the assassination of Prime Minister Hariri, and attempted to mobilise its supporters to pressure the government to reject such a decision, it ultimately failed. Instead of using armed capabilities to prevent the implementation of the decision (as it did in 2008), Hizballah took a different path and chose to deepen its political participation within the government. Such an action represents a political wisdom that may prove beneficial in Hizballah's transformation from violence to politics.

In conclusion, a closer analysis of the impact of the factors, dynamics and circumstances leading to its political integration reveals that Hizballah skillfully managed to adapt to the surrounding reality and promote its political interests at any given point in time. Consequently, Hizballah succeeded in branding itself as a legitimate political party in Lebanon's democratic political system that maintains a resistance movement. It seems that there is a place for relative optimism that Hizballah will completely abandon violence if it continues to hold significant political power. As a member of the serving government, Hizballah is sharing the responsibility for the political and socio-economic well-being of its electorate and therefore its daily activities are not directed at fighting Israel. Without the Lebanese public support, Hizballah will not survive for long only as a resistance organisation. Clearly the *Jihadist* element infused in Hizballah is a strong attracting feature, yet in order to maintain its prominence the organisation has to offer additional non-military incentives for its people.

Becoming entwined in politics forced Hizballah to demonstrate a more pragmatic approach to violence. It believed that a degree of flexibility must be accepted in the face of the changing political environment in Lebanon and the region. In Hizballah's view, failing to participate in the political scene could lead to isolation and loss of public support. Although there were hard-liners in the

ranks of Hizballah who opposed such a step, the pragmatist approach prevailed and 'instead of seeking to overthrow the system, however rotten it might be, Hizballah resolved to work and advance its cause within it.'⁹⁵⁷

This strategic shift conforms not only with the will of the Shiite constituency, but also to Lebanon's national and international interests. Ultimately, Hizballah's new "Lebanon-First" agenda allows it to maintain a legitimate status as a pivotal political party whilst keeping an extraordinary weapons arsenal. It seems that there is no political or military power, either inside or outside Lebanon that has the will or the capability to disarm Hizballah, at least for as long as it continues to represent the Shiite political mainstream.

Clearly Hizballah is still undergoing a "Lebanonisation" process, in which its interests are becoming more Lebanese in nature and less regional or global. Accordingly, the organisation is devoted to significantly promote its national interests through Lebanon's political institutions, and feels less obligated to serve the interests of Iran and Syria. It seems that only if Lebanon's interests would converge with those of its sponsors, then Hizballah would agree to act on their behalf. However, in the political situation that Iran and Syria are currently embroiled in, such a scenario is almost unfathomable. In any other scenario, Hizballah would not hesitate to prefer Lebanon and its own interests over those of Iran and/or Syria.

Finally, Hizballah is a remarkable example for a resistance organisation that was able to translate its violent strategy into the highest levels of political power, yet without succumbing to the pressure to disarm itself. Moreover, thanks to its popular support and its combat-proven military dominance, Hizballah was able to transform the Shiites from an invisible community into a rising political force. It would be reasonable to assume that Hizballah's success would embolden similar armed organisations with political aspirations to emulate it both in the Middle East and elsewhere.

⁹⁵⁷ Hirst, p. 241

Despite the relative optimism that accompanies Hizballah's current political situation, one must remember that it is still able, for more than 30 years now, to deploy fearless fighters who are motivated by their radical ideology onto the battlefield. Tom Donilon, former National Security Advisor to US President Obama, recently warned against Hizballah's attempts to hide its true nature. In his view the Shiite organisation:

...has worked assiduously to obscure its terrorist pedigree and convince the world that it is interested only in politics, providing social welfare services, and defending Lebanon. But it is an illusion to speak of Hezbollah as a responsible political actor. Hezbollah remains a terrorist organisation and a destabilising force across the Middle-East.⁹⁵⁸

However, motivation alone cannot kill people unless it comes with capabilities. Indeed, the common idiom "If you introduce a gun in the first act, you should fire it in the third", applies perfectly in the case of Hizballah. Without a full dismantling of its armed capabilities or surrendering them to the hands of the Lebanese army, Hizballah would always be regarded as a potential culprit, and be a source for international concern and pressure. In the political instability that Iran and Syria are currently dealing with, it is in the best interests of Lebanon, Israel and the world to remove Hizballah's military option off the table.

⁹⁵⁸ Donilon, Tom. "Hezbollah Unmasked", *International Herald Tribune* (18/2/2013), p. 12

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS

*"The best way in which a democracy can deal with terrorism is to persuade the terrorists to choose the ballot box instead of the bullet and the bomb."*⁹⁵⁹

Political violence in the form of terrorism has become an important factor and a significant concern for world politics in the post-World War II era. Although the international community has come to accept that the tactic of terrorism will not abate anytime soon, the last 40 years have demonstrated that 'terrorism is after all a tactic that groups may adopt but also abandon.'⁹⁶⁰ Audrey Cronin, who specialises in the decline and demise of terrorist organisations, highlights the importance of understanding how terrorism ends. In her view, this is 'the necessary first step to fashioning an effective grand strategy against *any* terrorist campaign.' Yet, she argues that 'the historical record of how terrorist groups have met their demise has hardly been plumbed for patterns and insights for today.'⁹⁶¹

Identifying the importance of the demise of terrorist organisations, practitioners and scholars in the past decade have been investigating the reasons for a terrorist organisation to abandon its violent tactics, and the methodologies for persuading them to do so. Leonard Weinberg, a prominent expert on terrorism, lists three main considerations influencing the end of terrorist campaigns: military defeat, success in accomplishing objectives and transformation to legitimate political means.⁹⁶² Although this study deals exclusively with terrorist organisations that transformed 'into a political party contestant for power in a democratic setting,' it accepts the assertion that

⁹⁵⁹ Barnaby, Frank. *The Future of Terror* (London: Granta Books, 2007), p. 28

⁹⁶⁰ Weinberg, p. 13

⁹⁶¹ Cronin, Audrey Kurth. *How Terrorism Ends: Understanding the Decline and Demise of Terrorist Campaigns*, p. 197

⁹⁶² Weinberg, pp. 28-41

defeat and success, although they have not been explored, may be equally important causes for ending terrorism.⁹⁶³

Political integration is not just a theoretical option but rather a realistic path that terrorist organisations may choose to take if certain conditions apply. The primary challenge of this research was to identify the factors, dynamics and conditions that explain the rationale for the integration of terrorist organisations into political systems. Furthermore, the study aimed at discovering dominant patterns and tendencies that would assist in analysing other terrorist organisations that may choose integration into political systems as an alternative, or as a complement, to violence. At the outset, one should bear in mind that the opposite phenomenon of abandoning the ballot box in favour of bombs is more common. Nonetheless, under specific circumstances – that lie at the convergence of the organisational, domestic and international levels – there can be an advance towards the political arena.

This study was based on a conceptual framework and carefully selected case studies aimed at testing the research propositions. In order to determine the most pertinent factors, the study undertook a comparative analysis of three terrorist organisations – the Irgun, the UVF and Hizballah – that underwent different levels of political integration. While the Irgun and the UVF completely abandoned violence and adhered to peaceful means, Hizballah still maintains its armed capabilities and in parallel operates a legitimate political party. Such an approach provides the opportunity to gain insight into the different relationships and processes at work. It also demonstrated that although in each case study the outcome was relatively successful, the set of calculations leading to the participation in politics was different. Moreover, to strengthen the empirical basis, the model that was presented in this study can be expanded through the addition of more case studies in the future.

In general, decision-makers and practitioners should avoid historical determinism, since there is no guarantee that similar circumstances or

⁹⁶³ Ibid, p. 13

calculations would necessarily lead to successful political integration.⁹⁶⁴ Weinberg points out that terrorist campaigns 'set in motion inherently unstable conditions...[that] lead the groups involved to undergo major transformations,' that their outcome, more often than not, cannot be predicted.⁹⁶⁵ Indeed, every terrorist organisation possesses unique characteristics. However, this research demonstrated that there are commonalities that allow for the identification of several factors under which organisations may abandon violence and participate in conventional party politics. It is important to emphasise that, on one hand, the lack of a single or several factors does not render the adoption of peaceful political activity impossible, though on the other hand, the more factors are relevant to a specific terrorist organisation, the greater the likelihood of transformation.

When examining the organisational level, the first factor that was clearly dominant among the Irgun, the UVF and Hizballah was their *strong dependence on public support*. As such, significant fluctuations in the level of public support are critical determinants of the life cycle of terrorist organisations, as they can 'create the necessary conditions for either a marked escalation or a significant de-escalation of violence.'⁹⁶⁶ It is commonly believed that terrorist organisations cannot survive as meaningful movements without the political and material support of their constituents or state-sponsors. Indeed, there have been terrorist organisations that were able to operate for many years with little popular support, but they usually failed to have an impact on the society in which they lived or the government against which they fought. Nonetheless, terrorist organisations that were able to influence significantly the policies and practices of societies, governments and, at times, also the international community, enjoyed mass support.

⁹⁶⁴ Cronin, Audrey Kurth. *Ending Terrorism: Lessons for Defeating al-Qaeda* (London: Routledge, 2008)

⁹⁶⁵ Weinberg, p. 117

⁹⁶⁶ Schuurman, p. 153

The cases of the Irgun and the UVF clearly illustrate that loss of public support for the armed campaign led to an understanding that a different approach had to be taken in order to affect the lives of peoples or the affairs of state. Apparently, the fear of defeat that would undermine their achievements so far was a great motivator for these organisations to change both their strategy and tactics.

David Ben-Gurion's determination to crush any opposition to his leadership, even at a risk of a civil war, convinced Menachem Begin, commander of the Irgun, to dismantle the organisation and renounce its territorial claim for Transjordan. Clearly, Begin recognised that most of Palestinian Jews opposed the existence of independent armed militias. As part of his unrelenting attempts to prevent a fratricidal war (especially after the Altalena incident), Begin knew that he had no other alternative but to focus his efforts on establishing a political party.⁹⁶⁷ In his memoirs he explained that his decision to abandon violence was based on the understanding that 'there are times when the choice is between blood and tears...[now] it is essential that tears should take the place of blood.'⁹⁶⁸ Instead of violence, he chose to promote and lead a peaceful political party that would eventually garner the support of the Israeli public and win parliamentary elections in 1977.

Similarly, the UVF found itself as the only loyalist organisation that was still committed to violence, when its republican rivals declared a ceasefire and adhered to the peace process, as stipulated in the Good Friday Agreement. When its supporters gradually became less tolerant of its violence, the UVF realised that the organisation's role as defender of the Protestants was quickly coming to an end. The only available alternative to maintain some of its power, popular backing and influence was to abandon violence and focus its efforts on political activity.

⁹⁶⁷ Shilon, Avi. *Begin: 1913-1992* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved Publishers, 2007), pp. 136-138 (Hebrew)

⁹⁶⁸ Begin, p. 176

Perhaps this realisation came too late for the UVF. Although it attained a non-violent and civilianised role in 2007, the UVF's political representatives failed to play a part in the power-sharing government and its public support since has significantly diminished. Dawn Purvis, who stepped down as leader of the PUP in June 2010 (after the UVF killed a fellow loyalist activist), pointed to the links between the PUP and the UVF as the major hindrance for their political success: 'I believe there are elements within the organisation [UVF], that have absolutely no interest in politics or the future of their party and no interest in the PUP.'⁹⁶⁹ Despite the clear message that Purvis wished to express, in a meeting that took place three months later, the political party voted to maintain its links with the UVF, explaining that it was still 'committed to giving a voice to working class loyalists throughout Northern Ireland.'⁹⁷⁰ It seems that in the case of the UVF the excessive use of violence led to a rapid collapse of legitimacy for the PUP. Consequently, both organisations suffer from poor popular and political support – they are unrepresented in the Northern Ireland Assembly, the British House of Commons and in the European Parliament.

The case of Hizballah is essentially different from the previous two, and yet the outcome is comparable. In contrast to the diminishing public support for the Irgun and the UVF, the fast growing support for Hizballah was the primary catalyst that motivated participation in first municipal and later national politics. The basis of this decision was the will of Hizballah's leaders, backed by their state-sponsors, to translate the organisation's increasing popularity into electoral gains, and consequently to further promote its ideology and resistance campaign. Interestingly, the popularity of Hizballah was the main factor that allowed it to maintain its independent armed capabilities whilst serving in government. As long as it was free from any pressure to choose between violence and politics, Hizballah would surely prefer to hold the stick at both ends. However, since its popularity has been

⁹⁶⁹ "Purvis quits PUP over murder of loyalist Moffett", *BBC News* (3/6/2010); <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/10222663> (accessed 10/10/2013)

⁹⁷⁰ "PUP 'keep link with loyalist UVF' despite shooting", *BBC News* (29/9/2010); <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-11440497> (accessed 10/10/2013)

plunging, as a result of its involvement in the Syrian civil war and alliance with Iran to assist President al-Assad, the political pressure on Hizballah to abandon violence is constantly mounting.

It seems that in the current Middle-Eastern discourse, which is largely shaped by the spirit of the "Arab Spring", ideology is 'no longer the same driving force as in the past,' and specifically in Lebanon, the public 'no longer believe[s] that the violent struggle is an effective means of realising its social, economic and national aspirations.'⁹⁷¹ This could be the most influential factor that could ultimately lead to Hizballah's decision to focus on political activity and abandon its resistance agenda. The opposition and outrage within Lebanese political circles towards Hizballah's part in the Syrian civil war, could provide the necessary incentive to follow its stated policy that it is first and foremost a Lebanese organisation committed to safeguarding the national interests of the Lebanese people. Failing to do so might result in its collapse.

In sum, regardless of the level of popularity of a terrorist organisation, the support in itself is an important factor shaping its behaviour and actions. Public support can broadly determine whether a terrorist organisation abandons violence and totally adheres to political action, continues and at times even escalates its violent campaign or agitates in both politics and armed conflict. In reference to terrorist's political integration, the findings indicate that high levels of public support actually instill in the minds of terrorist leaders that the organisation's ideology is prevailing, and therefore in order to translate its popularity into electoral gains the organisation should further promote its political aspirations through peaceful means. Low levels, on the other hand, lead terrorist leaders to the realisation that the organisation's objectives and method have failed, and therefore encourage them to change their tactics if they still wish to attain their ideological goals.

⁹⁷¹ Perlov, Orit. "The End of the *Muquwama*? Should Hamas and Hizbollah Face Reform or Collapse", *INSS Insight* (no. 473, October 2013), p. 4

The second organisational factor that had strong effect on the behaviour of the three examined case studies is the *existence of a competitive environment* in which they face dissident or competing factions. A profound ideological or strategic disagreement within a terrorist organisation, such as over a decision to negotiate with a government or the conditions to escalate the level of violence, often causes a backlash and splintering of some hardliners who adopt opposite or contradicting *modus operandi*.⁹⁷² More often than not, the fragmentation is divided into one element that appears to be more radical and violent than the other, thus emphasising the differences between the two. Consequently, the more moderate element wishes to distinguish itself from the extremist one and thus be more prone to take the political track and abandon violence.

Both the Irgun and Hizballah are examples for terrorist organisations that were established following an internal split. The Irgun became the militant opposition to the moderate Haganah, while the religious radical group Hizballah contested the secular ideology of the conformist Amal. However, whereas the Irgun was able to transform itself into a fully-fledged political party, Hizballah still carries out terrorist and armed operations whilst serving in a coalition government.

The divergence between the two organisations in this respect lies in the fact that while Hizballah did not undergo another significant internal split, the Irgun was rivaled by the dissident fanatic Lehi, whose brutal methods and questionable morality outraged the Jewish community. Wishing to avoid "guilt by association" with the Lehi's extremism, the Irgun was compelled to demonstrate a more moderate thinking and restrained operational tactics. These were the building blocks that would later serve as the framework for the Irgun's decision to opt for peaceful politics.

⁹⁷² Blum, Gabriella and Heymann, Philip, *Laws, Outlaws, and Terrorists: Lessons from the War on Terrorism* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2010), p. 149

The lack of an internal split within Hizballah serves as an explanation why it did not entirely renounce violence when it first decided to run for elections in 1992. The fact that Hizballah has not been significantly challenged by any major dissident group is the primary driving force that enables its continued commitment to violence while taking part in national politics. Indeed, over the years Hizballah was not seriously forced by its own members, the Lebanese government, its state-patrons or the international community to question the effectiveness of the duality of violence and politics. Should ideological or strategic disagreements occur in the near future within Hizballah, for instance over its support and direct involvement in the Syrian civil war, it could result in a split that might compel the organisation to re-think its strategy and tactics. In this case, Hizballah would potentially adopt a more moderate agenda and oppose the radical thinking of the dissident faction.

The UVF is somewhat a different case study than the previous two, in the sense that it was not a product of an internal split but rather an original creation of a group of people that were brought together by an authentic ideology and strategy. However, the UVF did not operate in a void, and soon after its establishment it was challenged by a competing grassroots movement, the UDA. Although the UDA did not serve as a dominant factor in the UVF's decision to renounce violence, it did contest the UVF over the effective representation of loyalist political aspirations. The most significant event, however, that ultimately persuaded the UVF to lay down its arms and focus on political activity was, in fact, an internal split. The dissident UVF's hard-line policy and brutality forced the UVF to re-consider its strategy and position among the Protestant community. Indeed, the UVF served both as an incentive and an inspiration for the UVF to begin a quest to find new ways to increase its political power.

In conclusion, terrorist organisations that operate in a competitive environment are likely to review their strategy and tactics (in comparison to the challenging groups) and decide in favour of political integration. Dealing with a constant opposition from rival or dissident elements not only erodes the

organisations' resources, but also encourages them to endorse substitute methods in order to distance themselves from their adversaries. States, on the other hand, should therefore focus their efforts not only on preventing terrorist attacks, but also on promoting a split between the organisation's most devoted and radical and its more moderate members and supporters.

The third factor that proved critical for terrorist organisations' integration into political systems relates to the domestic level and particularly the *counter-terrorism policies employed by the states* that deal with them. Whether it is a policy that offers economic, social and legal incentives for terrorists to adopt peaceful means, an unyielding strategy that is aimed at eradicating terrorist organisations by military and punitive methods or a mixed approach that combines firm counter-terrorism tactics with commitment to dialogue and compromise, states' behaviour has a considerable impact on terrorist organisations' decisions in favour or against political participation. Gabriella Blum writes that in many incidents where terrorist organisations adopted peaceful politics, the governments who coped with them demonstrated some readiness to address their grievances and willingness to make concessions or tradeoffs.⁹⁷³ Undoubtedly, states that ultimately decide to open a dialogue with terrorists are willing to take risks and meet some of their demands in the hope that by defining new ground rules they could provide the organisations with incentives to cease their violent operations.

In all the three analysed case studies, the policies of the states contributed greatly to the terrorist organisations' decision to choose politics as an alternative or a complimentary tactic to achieve their objectives. The Irgun was compelled to navigate between two poles, on the one hand, the British government, and on the other the Jewish Agency, which later became the newly-formed Israeli government. The British decision to terminate the Mandate for Palestine and bring the question of the future of Palestine to the UN, was a result of the failure to defeat or contain the Jewish armed campaign,

⁹⁷³ Blum and Heymann, pp. 135-137

and was fundamental to the establishment of a democratic Jewish state. The establishment of the state of Israel undermined the Irgun's self-proclaimed position as defender of the Jewish people against the British occupation and delegitimised its right to bear arms. At the same time, the insistence of Ben-Gurion to enforce the state's monopoly of the legitimacy to use force and to crush the rebelling Irgun at all costs forced the Jewish terrorist organisation to lay down arms and conduct its actions solely through its political wing.

The case of the UVF brings to the fore a different approach that was taken by the British government, which eventually resulted in a shift to politics on the part of the loyalist terrorist organisation. Soon after the outbreak of the Troubles, the British security establishment realised that its military tactics and legal measures alone, no matter how effective, would not resolve the Northern Ireland conflict. Therefore, political ingenuity led to a series of proposals and roadmaps for cessation of violence in the province. The hopes that these peace plans instilled in the hearts and minds of Catholics and Protestants alike, were the most convincing argument against any kind of violence in Northern Ireland. The British success in promoting a dialogue that would ultimately lead to a political compromise, and in parallel deploying firm security procedures against those who wished to destabilise the peace process, proved not only successful in ending the Troubles but also continue to serve as a model for resolving other protracted conflicts.

The case of Hizballah stands out in the field of terrorism studies as it demonstrates how powerful a terrorist organisation can become when it confronts a state that cannot formulate a coherent policy or clearly defined strategic objectives. During the 30 years that Israel has been contending with Hizballah, despite its military superiority, it failed to defeat the Shiite organisation, either on the frontline or in the political arena. Apart from a brief, yet futile, attempt to reach a political compromise with Syria that would indirectly involve Hizballah, Israel still believes that relying exclusively on its army is the only practical method to eliminate Hizballah. Israeli decision-makers appear not to demand from their political, diplomatic, military and

academic apparatuses new and creative strategies that would serve as an alternative to the battlefield.

The direct impact of Israel's policy towards Hizballah has been a constant increase in its popularity among Shiites in particular and Muslims in general. Describing Israel as a usurper of Muslim territories and using this to bolster its image and role as defender of Lebanon has been the primary source of Hizballah's electoral success. Moreover, the premise among Shiites that there cannot be a political compromise with Israel is fundamental to Hizballah's claim to the right to maintain its highly-advanced weapons whilst its representatives hold ministerial and parliamentary positions. If Israel would offer a political alternative to the Lebanese people, there is a possibility that those in Lebanon who oppose Hizballah's independent armed capabilities, and more so when it is directly involved in the Syrian civil war, would become more vocal in their demand for disarmament. Consequently, it would be much more difficult for Hizballah to defend the legitimacy of its military wing. Such a scenario could set in motion a process that would ultimately lead Hizballah to renounce violence and promote its objectives through the legitimate political channels in Lebanon.

Another prominent case of a terrorist organisation that was greatly influenced by a state's counter-terrorism policy, and should be briefly noted, is the Tamil Tigers. For nearly three decades the separatist organisation fought fervently for the establishment of an independent homeland for its people. Despite its formidable weapons and highly devoted members, the terrorist organisation was crushed by a massive and decisive military campaign launched against it by the Sri Lankan government.⁹⁷⁴ Although a peace process was underway for several years, it led to a deadlock and in 2006 the Tamil Tigers pulled out of the negotiations. The Sri Lankan government responded with a brutal crackdown that resulted in the organisation's demise, as expressed in its public admission of defeat in 2009:

⁹⁷⁴ Cronin, *How Terrorism Ends: Understanding the Decline and Demise of Terrorist Campaigns*, pp. 47-52

This battle has reached its bitter end...It is our people who are dying now from bombs, shells, illness and hunger. We cannot permit any more harm to befall them...We need to do everything within our means to stop this carnage. If this means silencing our arms and entering a peace process, that is something that we have already agreed to...If this means saving the lives of thousands of people, it needs to be done.⁹⁷⁵

The case of the Tamil Tigers further strengthens the assertion that terrorist organisations success and survival are much dependent upon the counter-terrorism policy exerted by the state. Cronin correctly argues that negotiations rarely end terrorism but they provide 'a means to manage violence and facilitate the longer-term decline of a group,' while achieving some of its strategic goals.⁹⁷⁶ It seems that more often than not, unwillingness to discuss and reach a political settlement is a major threat to the survival of any terrorist organisation, as it leaves the state with no other choice rather than employ an unyielding counter-terrorism strategy instead of an accommodating one.

In conclusion, it is clear that terrorist organisations' decisions whether to continue or abandon violence are greatly influenced by the policies of the states that they are dealing with. When terrorist organisations sense that their existence is threatened by states' military might or determination to resolve the conflict peacefully, they are likely to opt for political accommodation. In such cases, the choice to transform into a peaceful political actor becomes not only rational but also natural.

The last factor that stands out as critical to terrorist transformation into political party is the *impact of the international system*. More specifically, it is the direct or indirect effect of global events, state-sponsors or international institutions on the terrorist organisations' considerations, decisions and actions. This research demonstrated that there is significant and growing influence of the international system on terrorists' attitudes towards peaceful

⁹⁷⁵ "Dignity and respect for our People is all we ask", TamilNet (17/5/2009); <http://www.tamilnet.com/art.html?catid=13&artid=29389> (accessed 25/9/2013)

⁹⁷⁶ Cronin, *How Terrorism Ends: Understanding the Decline and Demise of Terrorist Campaigns*, p. 203

settlements. Moreover, it generates processes and dynamics that often persuade terrorist organisations that violence is no longer useful (and even harmful), and therefore substitute strategies could better advance their stated objectives. However, the extent to which the international system affects terrorist organisations is usually underrated. The in-depth analysis clearly revealed that it has a profound impact on the decision to prefer peaceful settlements over armed struggles.

The case of the Irgun is an outstanding example of a terrorist organisation that was immensely influenced by international events. The Jewish Holocaust, which raised the issue of international responsibility to provide a settlement to the remnants of the European Jewry, spawned a series of processes that eventually led to the UN decision to partition Palestine and establish a Jewish State. The Irgun, although officially still committed to the ideology of Greater Israel, took an active role in the deliberations leading to the decision, which provided it with international legitimacy and recognition. This and the creation of a democratic regime in the newly-established Israel, forced the Irgun to give up its territorial aspirations and reinforced its need to surrender its weapons, join the Israeli army and participate in the state's political system.

The Northern Ireland conflict is another excellent case that demonstrates the invaluable contribution of the international system to the reduction of the level of violence and promotion of a peaceful political settlement. It is commonly known that the conflict in Northern Ireland attracted immense international attention, and that its peaceful resolution is partially owed to third-party involvement. Also, the 9/11 attacks against the US can be regarded as a global event that influenced the terrorist organisations in Northern Ireland, Protestant and Catholic alike, to re-think their violent strategies. Another important issue that continues to contribute to the maintenance of the peace process in Northern Ireland is the workings of an independent international body responsible for overseeing the decommissioning of arms. The existence of the IICD assisted in establishing a

confidence-building mechanism that provided guarantees and incentives for all sides.

Facing such a level of international involvement, the UVF, which was less popular outside Northern Ireland than its Catholic IRA rival, recognised the international system as a crucial battlefield and embarked on a campaign to mobilise worldwide support. Its efforts were relatively successful and after the loyalist terrorist organisation had received international legitimacy it became much more difficult to continue endorsing and executing sectarian attacks. The international recognition and the marginal public support among its constituency contributed to the UVF's decision to abandon violence and to concentrate its strategy and tactics on peaceful politics.

The case of Hizballah is another example of the impact of the international arena on the behaviour and decisions of a terrorist organisation. This study illustrated that global events, such as 9/11 and the end of Cold War, had little influence on its militant ideology and strategy. However, state-sponsorship and international involvement remain amongst the most important factors that determine its day-to-day actions. Clearly, any alteration in Iran's and Syria's political and security stability reflects directly on Hizballah. In a reality in which Iran is facing international sanctions and threatened with a military attack against its nuclear installations and Syria is entrapped in a bloody civil war, Hizballah is losing both political power and public support. Siding with the Syrian president and sending operatives to fight alongside his army could be detrimental to Hizballah, and more so in case the US and Europe decide on a military intervention of any sort.

International involvement in Lebanon's internal affairs, manifested predominantly by UN Security Council resolutions calling for Hizballah's disbandment and disarmament and the Tribunal investigating the assassination of Prime Minister Hariri, is another element that significantly impacts Hizballah's decisions and limits its capability to act freely in Lebanon. Although international pressure has yet to persuade Hizballah to abandon violence completely, it continues to serve as an obstacle and is used by the opposition as

another tool to undermine the organisation and to weaken its standing among the Lebanese people. Undoubtedly, Hizballah is currently facing several formidable forces, among which the international community is perhaps the most powerful. In such political and security realities, it is not unthinkable that Hizballah's only chance to survive as an influential political actor would be to renounce its violent tactics, disarm and adhere strictly to peaceful means.

Evidently, conflicts between terrorist organisations and states in which the international community is heavily involved, have more chances to be resolved peacefully. Global events, international intervention and decline in state-sponsorship for terrorist organisations, serve as significant motivators for terrorist organisations that realise they are facing stronger forces and if they wish to remain relevant they have to make a significant change in their thinking and behaviour. These forces often have little tolerance for violence, and if terrorist organisations would not make the transition towards peaceful politics, they would risk their own existence.

Interestingly, several factors that were examined throughout the research and which initially would have seemed essential for terrorist integration into political systems, proved to be less relevant when analysed separately. The research showed that the role of violence is important for characterising and understanding the terrorist organisation's ideology and strategy, however it does not play a significant role in understanding its likelihood to join party politics. Similarly, their perception of the opponent is fundamental in determining the level of extremism and political aspirations, however it does not point out which terrorist organisation is most likely to adopt peaceful means.

The factors that have been highlighted above, and which were examined and presented in greater depth throughout the study, are more than just theory. In practice, in situations where the four dominant factors are present: (a) fluctuation in the level of public support for the terrorist organisation's strategy and tactics, (b) internal splits in the terrorist organisation (c) a mix of aggressive and accommodating counter-terrorism policies employed by the

state, and (d) the level and impact of international involvement in the conflict, they have an accumulative and tangible effect on a terrorist organisation's decisions, behaviour and actions, and therefore the process of integration into a political system by the terrorist organisation is not only more likely, but also faster and more efficient (see figure 5).

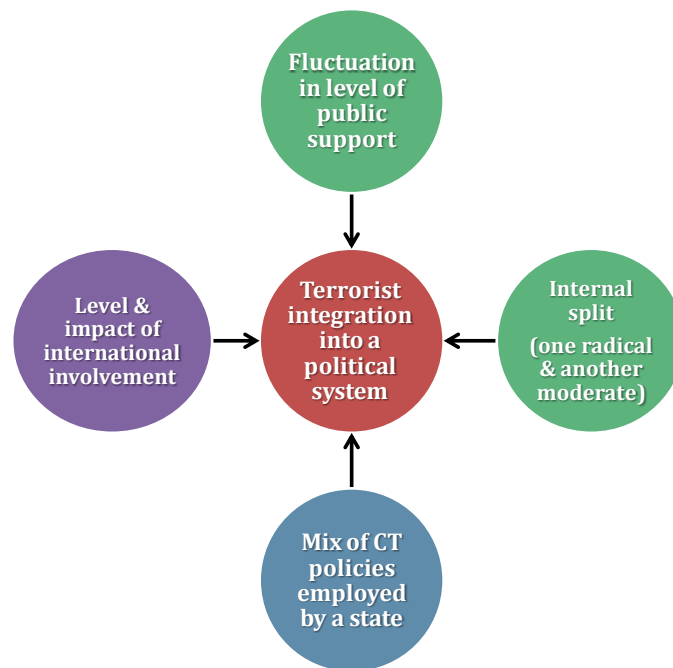


Figure 5: Dominant factors that lead to terrorists' political integration

Applying this theoretical model could provide a set of guidelines for decision-makers on how to instigate, encourage or enhance a transformation process within terrorist organisations that hopefully would end in leaving behind the militant strategy and accepting the political path as sole means to achieve their objectives.

Although political integration may seem to be a natural step in the life of a terrorist organisation, history provides plenty of evidence that suggests otherwise. Many organisations remain loyal to their violent tactics until they disband, while others remain in the dual-stage of combining violence and politics for a long period of time. This study determined that the presence of certain factors, whether on the organisational, domestic or international levels

– and preferably all at the same time – provide the necessary conditions for a successful integration to occur.

On a final note, when analysing a terrorist organisation that holds dogmatic views, advocates radical ideology and employs violent means, it is essential to examine the surrounding environment, dynamics and events, and not rely on purely operational and tactical aspects to understand its thinking, mechanisms and behaviour. More important is to explore thoroughly the circumstances leading to its foundation and its political aspirations, and its readiness to take part in the governmental structure of the state in which it resides and/or operates. In the evolution of a terrorist organisation there comes a stage that it is forced to determine the course and nature of its future operation. Strategically, it will face two primary alternatives: either to maintain its clandestine and militant *modus operandi* to achieve its objectives or to declare an end to its revolutionary stage and integrate into a state's political system in order to attain the same objectives.

In contemporary geo-political circumstances there could be greater probability for terrorist organisations to choose legitimate political integration if the appropriate factors and conditions apply. The meaning of such a decision is not that their objectives or demands are illegitimate, but rather that they have come to the conclusion that their efforts employing violence have been exhausted and so they are convinced that the best alternative to achieve their aims is through peaceful politics.

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